

A New Way to Think About Your Yard

article by Erin Jade; illustrations by Otis Mountain

When you envision supporting birds and butterflies in your yard, you probably picture spring and summer as flowers are blooming, pollinators are buzzing, frogs are singing, birds are congregating, and vivid signs of life are on full display.

But equally important are the seasons of dormancy and survival. These are the times when wildlife relies on us to offer places to pupate, hibernate, overwinter, and forage when stocks are low. These important seasons invite us to support declining biodiversity armed with a little knowledge and less physical labor than is required to create a perfectly tidy yard before the frost.

Due to human encroachment and development, wildlife habitat has been transformed into individually owned yards with broad expanses of turf grass that don't support the ecosystem at large. More than ever before, given the sheer amount of people and a swiftly changing climate, what we do with our individual yards is of greater and ever more critical importance.

Creating Spaces for Creatures to Survive the Winter

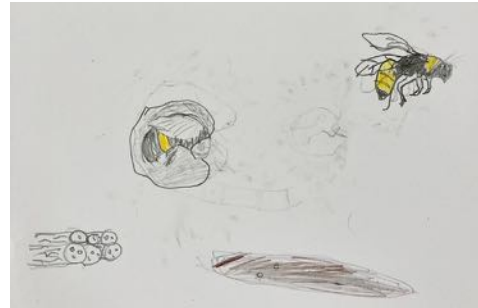
You may have heard of "leave the leaves," but wondered how a thick carpet of oak leaves won't smother the area of your lawn you play on. First, you may consider reducing the amount of turf grass in your yard in order to plant more native trees, shrubs, and flowers for at-risk wildlife support. Leaves provide habitat, insulation, and fertilization as they break down. A clean green lawn provides nothing in the way of food or habitat for wildlife but is useful for human sport and recreation. Rather than leaving all of the leaves where they fall and not being able to enjoy any lawn, a change of habit not entirely viable for most people, there are three simple ways you can leave the leaves in a more deliberate and sustainable fashion:

1. Strategically leave or move leaves, using them to mulch garden beds and suppress weeds where needed.
2. Compost them in designated places or leave them right on your grass if they're not too thick a covering.
3. Rake them into piles under trees to create protected areas away from foot traffic for pupating caterpillars that often fall from trees and need places to sequester. Incidentally, if areas under trees are perfectly clear and/or covered with mulch, this will not be helpful for caterpillars/butterflies. Conversely, a staggered landscape with plantings of various heights and strategic leaf piling is highly effective for their survival.



Helping Creatures by Leaving the Leaves

Gray tree frogs, eastern box turtles, queen bumblebees, ladybug beetles, and cecropia moths are just a few of the critters who overwinter in leaf litter. Decaying stumps, rotting wood, and roots under trees are havens for salamanders, garter snakes, and mourning cloak butterflies. Butterflies and moths overwinter in their pupated state, protected from the elements.



Most people don't realize birds rely on caterpillars to feed their young because babies can't digest hard seeds and fruits. Caterpillars and other insects provide a soft, palatable source of fat and protein necessary for population survival and without enough insects, bird populations suffer. Avoiding pesticides, planting native plants, and providing winter habitat are key ways we can bolster viability for our avian friends.

A number of species of native bumblebees are now at risk due to a decline in the specific plants they utilize for food and forage. By planting native plants for nectar and pollen, and providing them places to overwinter, we can help support their survival.

Leave not just the leaves but the stalks of vegetation such as goldenrod, black-eyed susan, anise hyssop, and anything with seed heads. These will be eaten by overwintering birds, and the stalks provide egg-laying sites for nesting bees and the wasps we rely on for pollination. If you cut plants, leave about 15 inches for nesting habitat.

Monochromatic elements in winter yards provide textural interest that perfectly manicured yards do not. There is a distinct beauty in the rustling of tall, yellowing panic grass stalks and faded hydrangea flowers whispering in cold wind. As we learn how to create winter habitat, we are grateful for the beauty and wildlife value the environment delivers in winter months. Life in this world can feel so out of our control that it is certainly comforting to know we can make a difference one yard at a time!





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Website:

LittletonConservationTrust.org

Trail Maps:

LittletonConservationTrust.org/trail-guide

Facebook:

facebook.com/LittletonConservationTrust

Can You Guess Where This Photo Was Taken?

(Look for the answer at the bottom of page 5.)



The Littleton Conservation Trust (LCT), distinct from the Town's Conservation Commission, is a private land trust that was formed in 1962 to promote Littleton's rural character; to preserve its water, plant, and wildlife resources and unique views; and to provide environmental education. The LCT is caretaker of over 300 acres of property (gifted by far-sighted residents) on which we manage a public trails system.

Littleton Conservation Trust Contacts

- ➔ **Jim O'Neil, 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 Facebook group, is an interactive site to share stories, photos, and observations of Littleton's conservation lands and area wildlife. See facebook.com/groups/639049749490984
- ➔ **LCT Walks** will be announced and updated 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 LittletonConservationTrust.org/contact-us/subscribe/

UPCOMING

Activities (A), Walks (W), Outdoor Events (O)

Date	Time	Event Description
11/25/22– 1/1/23	Dawn to dusk	Littleton Little Town Tree Hunt is back for its 6th year with 22 trees on 22 conservation trails. Thanks to organizers Lynne Bourque and Alicia MacDonald, this event entices people to explore our conservation trails. Find information on the Facebook page for Littleton Little Town Tree Hunt. (O)

Look for information about other upcoming events at LittletonConservationTrust.org

60th Anniversary Photo Contest Winner

We would like to congratulate Andrea Curran for her stunning winter photograph looking across Long Lake from Queen Road on January 19, 2022. She has been awarded a \$75 dollar prize.



Littleton Conservation Trust Membership and Donation Form — Fall 2022

☐ New ☐ Renewal ☐ Gift Membership ☐ Donation

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Name: _____

(Your date designates tax deduction year.)

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

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

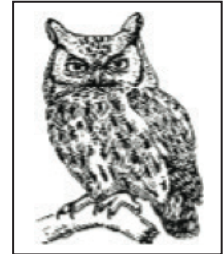
Checks should be made out to the "Littleton Conservation Trust" or just "LCT."

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

- | | |
|--|--|
| <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:

Christine Nordhaus, Treasurer
Littleton Conservation Trust
P.O. Box 594
Littleton, MA 01460



The Littleton Conservation Trust and You—A Partnership

You might well ask, "Why should I become a Trust member?" or "Why should I volunteer to help the Trust with their work to preserve land?" To paraphrase former President John Kennedy,

Ask not what the Trust can do for you, but what you can do for Conservation.

The Trust includes a group of trustees working to help the community secure and manage open spaces and undertake other forms of environment restoration. But Trustees cannot do these things without funds and volunteer support. Your financial support goes to help build our land acquisition fund, to support basic management of existing Trust properties, to produce this newsletter, to buy environmental books and make them available through the Town's library, to run nature walks and book

walks, and to put on an annual meeting that helps educate people about various environmental issues.

Financial support is far from the whole answer. The efforts of the Trust require volunteer hours to help maintain trails, do mowing, conduct boundary walks, and other environmental tasks around town. The Trust is much more than a handful of Trustees, it is the total membership. The more of you that join us in the work, both through financial support and volunteer hours, the better job that can be done in protecting and enriching our natural heritage.

Please join us if you have not already done so, and renew your membership if you haven't already. The Trust belongs to all of us in the Littleton family, and the future of open space in Littleton depends on people like you to care about open space for yourselves and for others who will live here after we are gone.

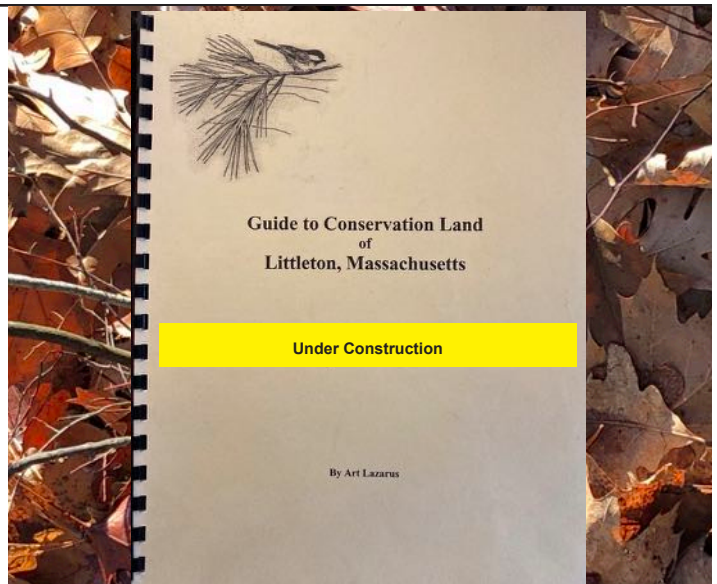
New Trail Maps—Update!

by Maggie Werneburg

The Littleton Conservation Trust is excited to share that a new trail map guide is in progress. A few years ago, members of LCT began collecting data for trails in Littleton using a GPS unit. The data for each trail is now complete and a draft trail map has been made for all conservation properties within the town.

LCT is now looking to assemble these maps into one central book that hikers can use to navigate the trails. With these new maps, LCT hopes to make it easier for the public to access the trails and enjoy the protected land in Littleton. With a projected publishing date in 2023, guides will be available for purchase at the library and the town hall, as well as available for download on our website.

If you are interested in helping put together this map guide or have ideas to share about something you would like to see included in the guide, please reach out to Maggie Werneburg at maggie@littletonconservationtrust.org.



Hiking Safely in Town and Beyond

by Melinda Hobausz

Several recent encounters on conservation-land trails, as well as the sad news of the death of a young, relatively-experienced Westford woman hiking in the White Mountains, have reminded the LCT Board that we have many new neighbors in town. Many of these people may be new to hiking the trails of New England. Therefore, we thought a Hiking 101 article might be helpful.

Prepare to Succeed

The important thing to remember is that even a short walk can present challenges if you aren't prepared. In fact, most of us have been reminded at one point or another that we should have been better prepared. For example, it is easy to enter Oak Hill in the mid-afternoon on a fall day, and find yourself still on the trail at dusk. Definitely not a big problem if you planned ahead and have a flashlight in your pack, but not so pleasant if you don't have one. Use these tips to plan your walks.

- Know the route you are going to take and have a map available. You can download maps of Littleton Trails at <https://littletonconservationtrust.org/trail-guide/>. Consider installing the AllTrails App on your phone, but be aware that you should have a map as a backup in case reception is poor or your phone runs out of power.
- If you are hiking alone, make sure that someone knows when and where you are hiking. This is important even if you are close to home. Let the person know what to do if they don't hear from you by a certain time—"If you don't hear from me by ____, please send help."
- Check the weather and think about how long you will be out. Be aware of when the sun rises and sets.
- Look over the trail map and think about alternate routes out of the area.
What if a trail is closed, for example? Is there an alternate trail, or will it be best to turn around and retrace your steps?



Pack for a Day Trip

It's true—you don't have to take a backpack for a short walk through conservation land. You can probably stuff the important things in your pockets. But, make sure you consider not only your comfort, but those of your human and furry companions, and pack accordingly. It is truly important to think ahead and be as prepared as you can be. It can make the difference between a great hike or something no one wants to do again. The first five entries, in addition to your phone, in the list that follows is what you should have with you at ALL times. The rest are important to think about during the different seasons and on longer hikes.

- **Map**—always have access to a map, even if you are completely familiar with the conservation property. We all know people who have gotten turned around and lost on familiar trails.
- **Headlamp or flashlight**—even a small one is helpful.
- **Water**—make sure you have enough for yourself and others.
- **Snacks**—granola bars, apples, dried fruit, and nuts are best unless you are doing a long (6–10 mile) hike
- **Time piece**—wear a watch or have some way of telling time. It will help you gauge the length of your hike, too.
- **First aid kit**—have at least bandaids, antibiotic ointment, cleaning wipes, and pain relievers. Buy a small kit if you don't already have one.
- **Summer gear**—have hats, bandanas, mosquito repellent, and sunscreen.
- **Winter gear**—bring microspikes and trekking poles. Make sure you have hats, gloves, extra socks, and an extra sweater layer.

Essential Trail Etiquette

Being considerate on the trail will make your day a lot more fun.

- People coming down the trail have the right of way.
- It is also polite to move over and let people behind you pass if they are moving faster.
- Move off the trail if you need to take a break so that people don't have to scoot around.
- Keep your dog(s) leashed or controlled. Not everyone enjoys meeting your animals.
- Try not to be very loud. Listen to the sounds of nature.
- Leave no trace—carry out trash and bring poop bags for dogs.

Final Thoughts

This is just a starting point for hiking safety. If you are unfamiliar

with this area, look at these websites for guided walks that can introduce you to hikes and local hikers.

Littleton Conservation Trust—<https://littletonconservationtrust.org/>

Groton Conservation Trust—<https://www.gctrust.org/>

Harvard Conservation Trust—<https://harvardconservationtrust.org/>

Sudbury Valley Trustees—<https://www.svtweb.org/>

The Trustees of Reservations—<https://thetrustees.org/>

Appalachian Mountain Club (look for local events)—<https://www.outdoors.org/>

Stay Safe and Have Fun!

Trail Improvement Report

by Jim O'Neil

Wow! This has been a busy time for the many trails around town. During the past sixteen months there has been a flurry of activity on Littleton's trails. Scouts and many others have contributed to the upkeep and improvements of our trails, to say nothing of the tireless efforts of the Trail Crew that has spent many hours building boardwalks and maintaining trails around town.

July 2021—Eagle Scout Brandon LaVoie and his fellow troop members cleared a mile-long main trail through the Littleton Town Forest connecting Harwood Ave. to the Durkee Farms development off Foster Street. Littleton Trail Crew members also created a three-quarter-mile-long loop off the main trail. These efforts have reestablished long-neglected trails that were originally created over thirty years ago.

July 2021—Eagle Scout Griffen Copp and his troop members built a boardwalk across a muddy area at Cloverdale Conservation Land along Great Road.

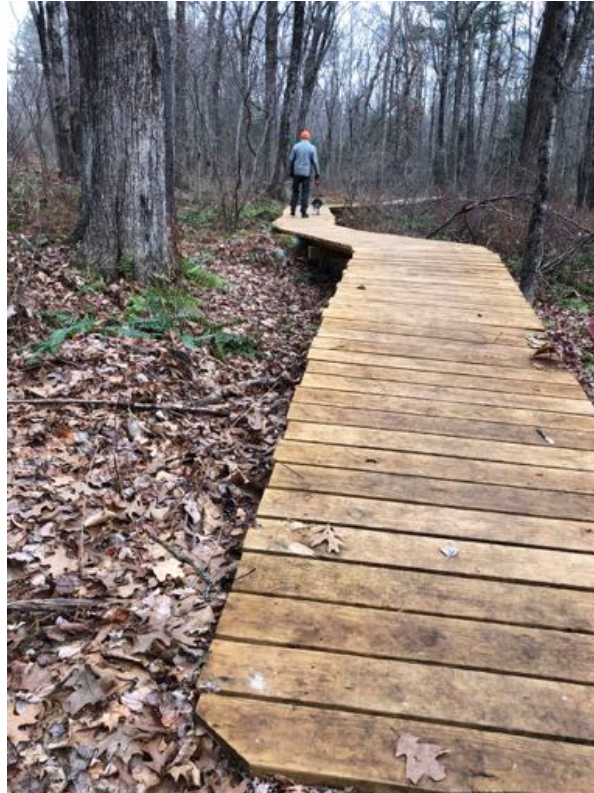
August–September 2021—Two boardwalks were constructed in Town Forest by Trail Crew volunteers, across muddy areas of the main trail.

October–November 2021—Trail Crew volunteers completed a 200 foot addition to the main boardwalk at Cloverdale.

Early Spring 2022—A 300-foot-long boardwalk was constructed by Dana Gray and Andrew Baker at Town Forest main trail.

March 2022—A new kiosk was installed by Trail Crew volunteers at Hartwell Preserve.

March 2022—Trail Crew volunteers also cleared Balsam Trail which connects to Town Forest from Balsam Drive.



April–May 2022—Two more boardwalks were constructed by the trail crew on the loop trail at Town Forest. The long-neglected Littleton Town Forest sign received a new life from Kaden Rowe and Logan Grant on May 8th. The 7th graders did a great job sanding and repainting the sign as a community service project.

The Town Forest boardwalk projects were only made possible through the generosity of Sarah and Chris D'Orazio, who allowed construction materials to be brought into the forest through their property, and Carl Riverburg, who transported the lumber to the boardwalk sites.

Early August 2022—Sudbury Valley Trustees built and installed a kiosk at Browns' Woods.

August 2022—Eagle Scout candidate Tim Sturtz built a boardwalk that crosses an unsafe area on the Morrison Extension trail.

August–October 2022—Five boardwalks were built along the Balsam Trail. Thanks go out to Carl Riverburg and Chris Rymer who removed dead trees, ground stumps, and transported lumber to the boardwalk sites.

September 2022—Eagle Scout candidate Brian Beltrami and his crew built steps to provide safe access at the Town Forest trail head on Harwood Ave.

October 2022—Eagle Scout candidate Emily Boyer and her crew created a new loop trail at Browns' Woods.

Thank you to all who have given their time and effort!

60th Year in Review

It has been a great year—one in which we have celebrated 60 years of existence as a trust. We have hiked at Newtown Hill and the Williams Land, created and voted on new LCT bylaws, staged two story walks with the help of Diann Ouellette-Haduch and her husband, climbed through the Smith Conservation Land, pulled numerous weeds around town, and enjoyed a picnic at the Sarah Doublet Conservation Area, among other things. However, it is the work that happens behind the scenes that is the true mission of the Littleton Conservation Trust. The constant work to check boundaries, maintain trails, address encroachments, and look for opportunities to conserve even more land, while also maintaining the requirements of conservation restrictions is work by

Board members and volunteers that forms the strong foundation of the Trust. We thank all of the people who help make this happen and look forward to working cooperatively with volunteers, the Town of Littleton, and other trusts to continue conserving land for the foreseeable future.



Answer to page 2 photo location: Williams Land

Fall 2022

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Littleton
Conservation
Trust



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Did you miss the annual meeting and presentation?

You are in luck!

The event was recorded, and the one hour presentation, "Where Have All My Birds Gone?" by Michele Grzenda, Town of Lincoln Conservation Director, was fascinating. Watch and learn more about the migratory patterns of birds and why they matter.

Find the link at

littletonconservationtrust.org/news



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Media Corner

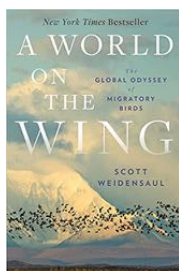
LCT donated books can be found at the Reuben Hoar Library.

These resources were all mentioned in our Annual Meeting presentation, "Where Have All My Birds Gone?" by Michele Grzenda, Town of Lincoln Conservation Director. Although I am not an avid birder, as some of the attendees were, I was astonished by what I learned about migratory birds and migration patterns. We all need to be more aware of the health of our bird populations and consider how we can change our behavior to help birds while also continuing to enjoy observing them.

Book—A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds

by Scott Weidensaul

Did you know that there is a small sandpiper that can fly nonstop from Canada to Venezuela? How about the fact that some birds can put each half their brain to sleep for just a few seconds at a time so that they can keep flying? If you need to know more—a lot more—about how birds are able to fly across oceans, over wide continents, and through many dangerous obstacles, this is the book for you. Author Scott Weidensaul, a Pulitzer Prize finalist, takes readers on a journey of discovery to find out more about migratory patterns, as well as how scientists and bird lovers are working to keep migratory patterns stable in the face of climate change and other environmental concerns.



Documentary—The Messenger: An Ode to the Imperiled Songbird

directed by Su Rynard

This documentary conveys a warning about how the fate of birds may also be a warning about problems that humanity will experience. Spanning several different continents, the documentary shows through amazing visuals the challenges that people, the climate, and the environment cause for songbirds' survival. While the message is difficult to accept, the documentary also presents information about the many people and organizations that are working to help songbirds such as orioles, thrushes, and other songbirds survive. The documentary can be accessed for free by signing up for Kanopy through the Reuben Hoar Library at littletonma.org/reuben-hoar-library. Click on Online Databases and look for Movies & TV (Streaming Services).

Podcast—Bring Birds Back

This podcast, hosted by Tenijah Hamilton, was started during the pandemic. It is presented by BirdNote, an independent media organization focused on birds. The host of "Bring Birds Back" speaks with experts and lovers of birds from different backgrounds, cultures, and communities. What they have in common is a desire to bring birds back. Episodes cover topics such as "The Fascinating World of Bird Behavior," "Spooky Birds That Squawk in the Dark," and "How to Be a More Ethical Birder." If you are interested in learning more, "Bring Birds Back" is a perfect Sunday afternoon listen! Look for this podcast at birdnote.org/podcasts/bring-birds-back.