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Eileen Entin, Chair **September 2018** **Elaine Quinlan, Editor**

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2018 CLC dues are payable now. The status of your dues payment can be found on the address label of snail-mailed newsletters, or near the top of the e-mail announcing this issue. If it says Dues Paid April 2017 (or earlier), it is time to renew your membership for 2018.

Pay your dues using PayPal on the CLC Website (<http://www.clclex.org>), or mail to:
CLC, Inc.
P.O. Box 292
Lexington, MA 02420-0003

Suggested membership levels:

- ___ \$20 (Twig)
- ___ \$50 (Branch)
- ___ \$100(Tree)
- ___ \$ (Other)

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___ New Member ___ Renewal

___ Go Green. Check here if you would like to have your newsletter in color with live links, using a download link from an email, instead of the paper snail mail.

Membership fees support our organization. CLC is a registered 501(c)(3) organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

Positions Available

Recording Secretary: This position involves taking minutes at Board meetings and filing any forms required to maintain our status as a nonprofit organization. Our Board meets bimonthly, so the position is suitable for an individual who can make only a minimal time commitment.

Walks Publicity Coordinator: Each spring and fall CLC sponsors a series of walks in conservation and open space. We are looking for someone to focus initially on walks publicity, and eventually to organize and broaden the types of walks we conduct.

Events Coordinator: Each year, CLC features a speaker on conservation, resource, or environmental issues at our annual meeting. To deepen and enlarge our educational focus, we are seeking an individual to take on the tasks of identifying, scheduling, and publicizing videos and speakers. Our goal is to offer 3-4 events per year as an exciting new way for CLC to continue to raise public awareness regarding local, regional and national environmental issues.

If you would like to know more about any of these positions, please contact Eileen Entin (eileenhome@gmail.com, 781-862-6418).

CITIZENS FOR LEXINGTON CONSERVATION 2018 FALL WALKS

All walks are free and open to the public

Saturday, Sep 8, 10:30 am - 12 noon - Bugs & More at Willard's Woods

On this walk we'll look for invertebrates of all kinds, particularly dragonflies, spiders, and butterflies. We'll look under logs, whack tree branches to see what falls out, and sweep-net the grass. Children with adults are welcome. Meet at the parking lot off of North St. near 31 North Street. Rain or lightning will cancel the walk.

Walk leader: Ned Eisner (781-454-8023, edward.eisner@verizon.net)

Sunday, Sep 9, 1-2:30 pm – Wright Farm Event (see page 5)

Saturday, Sep 22, 1:30-3 pm – Wright Farm Event (see page 5)

Sunday, Sep 23, 1-4 pm – Cotton Farm Apple Picking Event (see page 6)

Saturday, Sep 29, 8-10 am – Fall Birding at Dunback Meadow

Dunback Meadows during late September can offer surprises as the end of the return migration of vireos and warblers approaches; and the sparrow migration is increasing in numbers. Meet at the Allen St. entrance.

Walk Leader: Bobbie Hodson (781-861-9421, robertahodson@comcast.net)

Saturday, Sep 29, 10-11:30 am – Wright Farm Event (see page 5)

Saturday, Sep 29, 11 am - 3 pm - 25th Anniversary Lexington Bikeway Events (see page 7)

Tuesday, Oct 2, 2-4 pm – Fall Senior Sneaker Walk on DCR's Beaver Brook North

Join Kate Fricker and Marie Roberts for a casual 2-hour walk around the trail system on the portion of DCR's Beaver Brook North property that lies behind Brookhaven at Lexington located at 1010 Waltham Street. Kate and Marie will point out natural features as well as historical sites located on the property. The trails are well-graded making for easy walking. Don't forget your water bottle. Meet at the entrance to the Brookhaven Nature Path adjacent to the employee parking lot where parking of guests is allowed. Or take the #3 Lexpress bus which stops at Brookhaven at 1:40 pm.

Walk Leader: Kate Fricker (kfricker@alum.swarthmore.edu)

Sunday, Oct 7, 2-4 pm – Lower Vine Brook Exploration

If you have found the trail system in the Lower Vine Brook Conservation property confusing in the past and have not discovered the new colored arrow trail markers, this is your chance to reacquaint yourself with this property. Meet your guide at the trail entrance on the Fairfield Drive cul-de-sac between 9 and 15 Fairfield Drive.

Walk Leader: Keith Ohmart (kohmart@verizon.net)

Monday, Oct 8 (Columbus Day), 1-2:30 pm - Wright Farm Event (see page 5)

Sunday, Oct 14, 2-4 pm – New ACROSS Lexington Route J Introductory Walk

Be the first to walk *ACROSS Lexington's* newest route. Route J links the Minuteman Bikeway with one of Lexington's lesser-known Conservation properties, Liberty Heights. The route is steep in parts but the footing underneath is either on paved surfaces or level, smooth walking trails. Meet at the Waldorf School parking lot.

Walk Leader: Eileen Entin (eileenhome@gmail.com)

Sunday, Oct 21, 2-4:30 pm – Whipple Hill to Wright-Locke Farm

Perhaps you were unaware that Lexington's Whipple Hill Conservation property directly abuts Winchester's Wright-Locke Farm property. This walk will explore the trails connecting these two open space properties with the added bonus of enjoying some late fall foliage color. Meet at the entrance to the Whipple Hill property at the crest of Lexington's Winchester Drive opposite Berkshire Street, which is on the left. Park on Berkshire Street due to limited parking at the trail entrance and walk across Winchester Drive to the entrance.

Walk Leader: Bob Hausslein (rhausslein@rcn.com, 781-862-9102)

Saturday, Nov 17, 9-11 am – Early Ducks and Late Season Summer Migrants

(Co-sponsored with the Menotomy Bird Club)

The Arlington Res and adjacent farm fields may be the best place in Lexington for bird variety. This walk will be looking for early arriving ducks and lingering fall migrants. Meet at the Arlington Res parking lot off of Lowell Street.

Walk Leader: John Andrews (jandrews166@gmail.com, 781-382-5658)

Thank You Walk Leaders

CLC's walks program is entirely dependent on our walk leaders, who are all volunteers, for its continuing success. We wish to express a sincere thank you to Keith Ohmart, Bobbie Hodson, Roger Wrubel, Harry West, Elaine Quinlan, Judy Mello, Alex Dohan, Bob Hausslein, Sunder Neelakantan, Judy Crocker, Eileen Entin, Russ Cohen, and Kate Fricker for their leadership on our Spring 2018 walks and activities.

Explore Wright Farm Conservation Area

NATURE THROUGH THE LENS—September 9, 2018; 1:00 to 2:30 pm

Come to Wright Farm and learn to photograph flowers, insects, and other wildlife. Photographers of all ages are welcome. Bring any camera you have, from your smartphone to SLR, and be ready to discover new subjects and new techniques for creating nature photographs.

Sunday, September 9th from 1:00—2:30 pm (Rain date: Sunday, September 16th)
Meet Leader Tom Whelan at the Wright Farm Barn, 241 Grove Street

Pre-registrar at Conservationcomm@lexingtonma.gov, put Photography in the Subject Line, to be guaranteed participation in this event.



A FARM IS MORE THAN COWS—September 22, 2018; 1:30 to 3:00 pm

Explore Wright Farm and Discover the Small Animals Who Live There. Wright Farm's fields and woods host a variety of animals, including those with 0, 2, 4, 6, 8, and more legs. Come prepared to dig and explore at this family-friendly event.

Saturday, September 22nd from 1:30—3:00 pm
Meet Leader Fran Ludwig at the Wright Farm Barn, 241 Grove Street

Pre-registration is welcome at Conservationcomm@lexingtonma.gov; put Cows in the Subject Line.



DENDROLOGY: SPEAK FOR THE TREES— September 29, 2018; 10:00 to 11:30 am

Come learn what the trees can tell us about the landscape. You'll learn the skills of a forester through tree identification and more. Come prepared to explore the outdoors at this family-friendly event.

Saturday, September 29th from 10:00—11:30 am;
**Meet Conservation Ranger Adam Green at the Wright Farm Barn,
241 Grove Street**

**Pre-registration is welcome at Conservationcomm@lexingtonma.gov;
put Trees in the Subject Line.**

I SPY PLANTS—October 8, 2018; 1:00 to 2:30 pm

Come investigate plants at Wright Farm. You'll observe leaves and learn about their associated plants. Did you know leaves are solar collectors for plant production? Ever wonder why leaves are different shapes and textures? Come prepared to walk and explore Wright Farm to learn about plants and animals too! This program is geared towards children ages 5 to 10 years and their adult guardian.

Monday, October 8th from 1:00—2:30 pm
**Meet Conservation Commissioner Alex Dohan at the Wright Farm Barn,
241 Grove Street**

**Pre-registration is welcome at Conservationcomm@lexingtonma.gov;
put Plants in the Subject Line.**





Apple Picking at Cotton Farm Conservation Area
Sunday, September 23rd, 1-4 pm
(Rain Date Sunday September 30th)

Join the Lexington Conservation Stewards for an afternoon of apple picking and outdoor fun at our Cotton Farm Orchard. Cotton Farm is located on Marrett Rd. across from Bacon St. Park on the shoulder of Marrett Rd.

- . Free family-friendly event
- . Apple picking and cider pressing
(Apple supply limited: one small bring-your-own bag per household)
- . Nature crafts and children's activities
- . Guided nature hike
- . Lexington Junior Ranger Program
- . Meet Cotton Farm's Bee Keepers

For more information: landstewards@lexingtonma.gov or 781-698-4532



Lexington Conservation Stewards



Minuteman Commuter Bikeway [25th Anniversary Celebration](#)

Come celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway on Saturday, September 29, 2018, when Arlington, Lexington, and Bedford will host a tri-town celebration of this popular rail-trail. The bikeway was completed and dedicated by the three towns during 1992-93, and its success has inspired countless rail-trail and pathway projects in New England and beyond. As we celebrate the past 25 years of *Going Places on the Minuteman Bikeway*, we look forward to an even better trail that is part of a robust regional bicycle transportation network.

Community celebrations will be held simultaneously along the bikeway in all three towns from 11 am to 3 pm on September 29. Lexington will host its event outside the Visitors' Center, featuring an afternoon party on the lawn complete with a local band, guided bike and walking tours, tables for local community and bike-related groups, and refreshments. Local bicycle enthusiasts and bike shops will be on hand to demonstrate the wide range of bicycles available today, to help with bike maintenance, and to promote support for the growing bicycle community. The Munroe Center for the Arts is organizing special visual art and musical interludes along the length of the bike path in Lexington.

Of course, the best way to celebrate the bikeway's success is to get out and enjoy it by foot, bicycle, skates, or wheelchair! We look forward to celebrating "Minuteman Bikeway Day" with everyone on September 29th.

Throughout September, in collaboration with the Lexington Historical Society, an exhibit of historic photographs, *Trains and Bicycles in Lexington*, will appear in the CVS windows on Massachusetts Avenue. A historic presentation, *Living History: The Lexington Branch, from Railway to Bikeway*, is scheduled for 7:00 PM on Wednesday, September 5th, at the old Lexington depot building.

For up-to-date details, visit <https://bikeway25.org>. To learn more about the Minuteman Bikeway visit <http://minutemanbikeway.org> and view the 25th Anniversary video at <http://youtube.com/watch?v=gBY81vjAD2E>.

The Stewardship Report: Updates from the Conservation Division and the Conservation Stewardship Program

By Jordan McCarron

With the bulk of the 2018 summer season behind us and the intense humidity of the latest heat wave blazing down on Lexington, what better time than now to sit in my air-conditioned office and reflect on the 2018 stewardship season.

2018 has been a year of extremes. After a barrage of snow storms and nor'easters tore through Lexington in March and early April and brought down more trees and branches than I've ever seen, our intrepid Steward sawyer crew was busy clearing our trails, parking areas, and abutting yards well into June.

Then came the heat, and with just enough rain to make this the most lush and overgrown summer in recent memory. I and my summer trail crew simply cannot keep up with the amazing amount of growth out on the land. I took a bike ride through Dunback Meadow on August 1st and was amazed to find that I could barely pass through several sections of trail; my crew had only just maintained that entire trail system two weeks prior.

Despite the heat and over-eager vegetation, we press on. 2018 has been a busy year for both native plant restoration work as well as trail infrastructure and property improvements. At Hayden Woods, where the Conservation Division and Stewards received a \$23,000 grant through the state's Recreational Trails Program for boardwalk and trail improvements, we have constructed nearly 300' of new boardwalk since April. Approximately 80' of this boardwalk sits on durable plastic culvert sections—a new design concept for the Stewards. The culverted section is located in an area of high seasonal water and should allow for less water displacement and thus less impact to the ecosystem there; the Stewards will be monitoring this section over the next several years for durability. For pictures of the project, visit our [Flickr](#) album.

At Idylwilde, the Conservation Division completed a two-year garden expansion project in late July. The Idylwilde Community Gardens now have 20 additional large plots with another 30 planned for spring 2019; the entire Community Garden complex now covers approximately one acre. This project coincided with the retirement of the Dunback Meadow Community Gardens site after more than 40 years in operation. The Dunback Meadow Gardens were closed due to wetland and environmental impact issues. For pictures of the project, visit our [Flickr](#) album.

The Conservation Division has continued to work with [Russ Cohen](#) on habitat restoration projects utilizing native wild edible plants at both Willard's Woods and Daisy Wilson Meadow as well as [Grassroots Wildlife Conservation](#) on native sandplain wildflower restoration at Joyce Miller's Meadow. At Daisy Wilson Meadow, Girl Scouts from Lexington Troop 63054 worked with Russ in May to plan and install a native edible plant community that will provide screening and privacy both for trail users and for neighbors along the

meadow. The project is part of a larger initiative to improve the habitat and scenic value of the meadow; a 180' boardwalk was completed last fall and invasive plant removal has been ongoing since 2015. Information on the project can be found [here](#).

At Joyce Miller's Meadow, the Conservation Division and Stewards are working with staff from Grassroots Wildlife Conservation to establish natural populations of [New England Blazing Star](#), a state listed Species of Special Concern. Volunteers from the Stewards and Community Gardening program have assisted with propagating the flower in pots at their homes; a variety of other pollinator-friendly wildflowers have been planted as well. The next planting will occur in the meadow in late September 2018. Information on the project can be found [here](#).

At Cranberry Hill, the Conservation Division has begun a long-term deer browse monitoring study in an effort to gauge the impact of deer browse on forest regeneration. We partnered with a researcher at Harvard Forest and earth science students at Minuteman Technical High School. The students built a 10 x 10 meter fence enclosure with an adjacent control plot to measure forest composition and succession with and without the presence of deer. Over time, we hope this data will help us better understand how deer are changing our environment and inform our management of the land. Two additional enclosures will be built during the upcoming academic year.

Finally, the Conservation Division has hired [Kyle Zick Landscape Architecture](#) to help design much needed infrastructure improvements at our Cotton Farm Conservation Area. The improvements will include a new parking area and accessible trail leading to a viewing platform on the pond. Additionally, the existing driveway that cuts through the property will be re-naturalized. Design and permitting work will occur this fall with construction scheduled to begin in the spring of 2018. The Conservation Division will be hosting two community charrettes to help gain input on the project this fall; stay tuned!

As always, there will be many more opportunities to volunteer and get involved with the Stewards well into the fall. The Stewards are hosting Stewardship Saturdays on September 15th, October 20th and November 17th to start. Information on our Stewardship Saturday program can be found [here](#). Information on our Conservation Stewardship Program, including how to become a member, can be found [here](#) or by contacting Jordan McCarron, Conservation Stewardship Coordinator, at jmccarron@lexington.ma.gov or 781-698-4532.



Lexplore Sustainability 2.0

Tools for Thriving in a Changing Climate

Saturday, September 29, 2018
Lexington High School Cafeteria
10 am – 3 pm

Climate Change and the Path to Sustainability **Lexplore Sustainability 2.0: Tools for Thriving in a Changing Climate**

Mark your calendar for an exciting one-day sustainability fair. *Lexplore Sustainability 2.0: Tools for Thriving in a Changing Climate* will be held on Saturday, September 29 from 10 am to 3 pm at Lexington High School. The Fair will be an exciting and enjoyable opportunity for families, town officials and business people to learn, ask questions, participate in family activities and get the latest expert advice on all matters sustainable.

The Lexplore Sustainability Fair will emphasize ways in which consumers can help to combat climate change. Lexplore will feature inspirational speakers, hands on workshops, a variety of vendors, and demonstrations, in areas of sustainability. A morning panel discussion led by members of the Lexington Sustainability Committee will review the many advances the town has made in making Lexington one of the most sustainable communities in the state. The exciting new Climate Action and NetZero Plans, hot off the press, will be presented. In the afternoon there will be a panel discussion with speakers from various Massachusetts non-profit groups, speaking about climate change in terms of adaptation, mitigation, and resiliency, focusing on public health, clean water, clean air and healthy buildings.

Lexington, Massachusetts and the nation as a whole need to reduce their carbon footprints to stem and reduce the rising levels of CO₂ in our atmosphere, and learn ways to mitigate these changes and adapt our behaviors to be sustainable. The recent report released by the National Academy of Science makes sobering reading about the dangers ahead for the planet if carbon emissions aren't reduced much faster than we are currently attempting. The article can be found on the LexGwac website, Lexgwac.org, and is must

reading for all who are concerned about climate change. It is no longer sufficient to think reducing CO2 is something somebody else will do: it is up to us, at the individual and local level, especially given the backward direction the current federal administration is taking.

We see the implications of climate change here in Lexington. A few examples: Rain patterns are different. We had particularly hot muggy weather this summer. We have ticks—year-round ticks! Climate change has allowed ticks to expand their range and extend the tick season (now vets advise dog owners to use tick protection year round, while a few years ago we had time off during the winter). The wooly adelgid insect threatening our hemlocks is helped by higher temperatures.

To our credit, the Town of Lexington and its residents have done many things over the years to address climate change. Solar panels have been installed on municipal buildings and schools, and an extensive solar array has been installed at the landfill, thanks to the hard work of the expert volunteers on our town appointed committee, Sustainable Lexington. A “Net Zero Task Force” has worked to develop a plan for further energy reductions throughout the town. Just a few days ago the Lexington Board of Selectmen unanimously approved both the Sustainable Action Plan and the Getting to Net Zero Emissions Roadmap! Nonetheless, while many residents have installed solar panels and had energy audits, there is much more that can be done to help the town be sustainable and resilient in the face of changing and challenging climate events.

Come to the Lexplore Sustainability Fair to learn about ways you can do more in your life to be sustainable and resilient. For many people sustainable practices are new and often confusing. The Fair provides an opportunity to learn from experts, get questions answered and take away some practical steps and changes that can be accomplished. This is a special opportunity to learn more about the sustainable practices we need to adopt in the face of inevitable changes in climate.

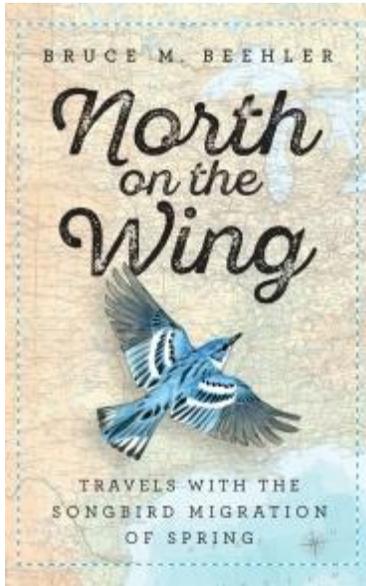
For up-to-date media news on the fair, visit the LexGwac.org website. Facebook users can go to the Lexington Global Warming Action Coalition’s Facebook page and “Like” the page to get updates on Lexplore. Get in touch if you have an idea, want to be a vendor, non-profit, or community group at the Fair. Also be in contact if you can volunteer to help in the planning of the Fair or on the day of the Fair. Help would be welcome!

Email: lexploreusustainability@gmail.com

Photo Credits

Page 13: Cataldo Reservation, provided by Holly Samuels

“North on the Wing”
by Bruce M. Beehler
A Review by Keith Ohmart



If you have ever entertained the notion of following the songbirds of spring as they migrate north for the breeding season this is your book. To borrow a phrase, Bruce Beehler takes you under his wing from the very first pages and leads you effortlessly along as he covers over 12,000 miles in just over 3 months, recording a total of 259 species of birds along the way.

Modeled in part on Edwin Way Teale’s 1951 classic, *North with the Spring*, Beehler’s adventures begin on the South Texas coast where a large percentage of North America’s summering songbirds first make landfall. From there Beehler’s travels take him up the Mississippi flyway into Canada and as far as roads can take you to the edge of the great northern boreal forest. Beehler’s goal throughout is to observe and record as many of our summer migrants on their nesting grounds as possible.

Traveling by car, bike, kayak and on foot, we experience the awakening of spring through Beehler’s eyes, as he visits critically important bird sanctuaries and stopover points on his travels north. Flowers bloom, forests leaf out and the all-important insect life that fuels the avian world’s northern journey emerges, chapter by chapter.

Complementing his telling of the epic sweep of the overall migration story, Beehler fills in countless details from the lives of individual species ranging from their habits on their migratory journey to their preferences in the selection of nesting habitat. In many ways, it was the relating of these details that was my favorite part of the book. My appreciation upon encountering our familiar summer feathered visitors has been significantly enhanced from reading Beehler’s work.

Now if only someone would take up the task of filling in the gaps of where our songbirds go to spend the winter months as a companion piece to this volume.

What’s Happening at Cataldo Reservation? Update

By Holly Samuels, Cataldo Reservation Conservation Steward

Group Work Days

Restoration work on Cataldo Reservation in East Lexington got a big boost in this Spring with four group work days. Two Sundays in April we had large groups of Boy Scouts helping Eagle Scout candidate Nicholas Keim with his leadership project. The Boy Scouts

cleared a huge amount of brush that had been cut over the past year and, thanks to the Lexington DPW, filled a dumpster each weekend. They also helped plant some new native plantings down by Mill Brook. Now there is an open vista from the trail down to Mill Brook. A longtime resident walked by and told us it was the first time he had seen the water! As we were speaking a well-timed muskrat swam by and entered his home in the reeds. A nice moment for us all.

In May, a terrific group from Grace Chapel, along with some LHS students and neighbors, did a remarkable job filling 12 big contractor bags with invasive Garlic Mustard. This effort went a long way toward the goal of arresting the reseeding of the plant along the trail. Continuous monitoring and pulling in subsequent weeks has made a big impact, however the first year rosettes are carpeting a good portion of the reservation. Garlic Mustard seed has an 8 year viability, so more of this kind of effort will be needed in subsequent years.

The June Stewardship Saturday, the first of the season, was held at Cataldo Reservation. A great crowd of 23 ninth graders showed up to get in their community service hours at the last moment. I'll have to remember to sign up for this slot next year! The DPW graced us with another dumpster, this time filled half with compost and half with wood chips from the Lexington Composting Facility. Because there is no place to drive into Cataldo and dump materials, all the compost and wood chips had to be transported by wheelbarrow into the reservation where it could be piled for future use. Unloading that dumpster took a few hours and then it was loaded with more accumulated brush.



Native Plants

This summer it has been fun to watch the newly introduced native plants blooming. After seeing the beautiful yellow Marsh Marigold blooming this spring, we have had a succession of red Columbine, Blue Flag Iris, and now the Great Blue Lobelia and Bee Balm are starting to flower on the edge of the brook. There is a large area of existing native Phlox that was roped off in the early spring to keep it from being trampled. It has been in glorious bloom recently and more has been added. There is a small patch of existing Milkweed but no flowers have appeared. Hoping to see some Monarchs on that someday.

The plants that went in last fall made a good return appearance, better than expected. The Ostrich Ferns planted last year did return, even though they looked dead last fall, so we planted more this spring and they have been thriving in the low areas, along with the existing Jewelweed. Snakeroot planted along the beginning of the trail returned and some is blooming now. Shrubs of Clethra (Summersweet), Arrowwood Viburnum, and Fragrant Sumac purchased as nursery remainders last fall survived the winter despite a lot of rabbit damage and are blooming and thriving. I'm hoping to see them spread.

A donation in early July of Mayapple, Sensitive Fern, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, and Wood Anemone from Meg Himmel of the Lexington Field and Garden Club (who also donated some of the Ostrich Fern) have been struggling but are hanging in there beneath some large White Pine. If they can get established, I'm hoping they will spread RAMPANTLY and give us a lot of material to transplant in future. These are all great colonizers that can shade out the invasive seed bed from sprouting.

In the newly exposed areas, of course the job now is to keep the invasive plant regrowth in check. This requires regular monitoring, pulling, and cutting. Now that I am licensed and approved to use herbicide, painting the cut stumps of things like Buckthorn, Multiflora Rose, and Oriental Bittersweet has also been making an impact. Sprouting of new invasive plants is inevitable with such an established seed bank in the soil, but I am working on blocking some areas with cardboard and the new pile of woodchips where there are just too many seedlings to hand-pull. I'm on a Buckthorn rampage right now, as this invasive tree is seeding. Also trying to keep Black Swallowwort from going to seed.

Lots of Pokeweed, Sumac, Jewelweed, and some kind of bramble are coming up, as well as lots of Goldenrod that is starting to flower now. It is interesting to see what comes up when there is light and air for the seeds. An amazing quantity of Sensitive Fern came up near the brook, which was quite a surprise as it was not visible at all last year. I will keep editing even the native growth to maintain a vista to the water at some points along the trail.

So it goes. One year, plus some, is now over. Now planning work for winter when the leaves and vines are bare, particularly along the upper side of the trail where there is still a significant amount of brush before entering the pond area. Hoping for another dumpster and group workday this fall. Saw a Great Blue Heron in the pond a few weeks ago and

there are numerous turtles sunning on deadwood in the water. Mallards make the brook and pond their nursery and find lots of good food in the low water areas of the floodplain during summer. I'm still amazed to see the quantity of stormwater that rushes into Mill Brook from the storm drains during a rainstorm and how quickly it is absorbed into the floodplain. This is truly a vital resource area and it is wonderful to have the opportunity to get to know it and find ways to make it both a little more pleasant to traverse and a healthier habitat for its many residents.

If anyone would like to help with this effort at Cataldo Reservation in any way, or would like to make a donation of plants or funds to purchase them, please email me, Holly, at elhepinfo@gmail.com

Thanks for your interest and come take a walk on the trail sometime!

Black Walnut – a Tree of Many Uses

By Russ Cohen

While well-known and appreciated over much of the U.S., especially in Missouri and other Midwestern states (where it is commercially grown and harvested), not = many people around these parts are familiar with the Black Walnut tree (*Juglans nigra*), and fewer still have experienced the distinctive taste of the ripe nuts. While these nuts admittedly present a formidable challenge to process and open, their unusual and assertive flavor has no counterpart, and you may find it to be well worth the trouble, especially in the form of Black Walnut Honey Butter or Honey Squares.

Although the species is not native to Lexington (nor elsewhere in Massachusetts – their natural range is to the south and west of here), Black Walnut are now found here and there throughout Middlesex County. One spot I have seen a lot of these trees (over two dozen) is in Lexington's Willards Woods Conservation Area, particularly the section closest to North Street.

Black Walnut trees tend to leaf out later than most local species, and are hard to recognize when dormant (unlike Shagbark Hickory's distinctively shaggy bark, the bark of Black Walnut trees is hard to distinguish from other species). Their pinnately-compound leaves also bear a strong resemblance to those of several other species, like Sumac or Ailanthus. One way to confirm the identity of a tree as a Black Walnut is to "scratch and sniff" the central stem of a leaf. If you've got a Black Walnut, you will smell a distinctive, spicy aroma, which happens to be identical to the smell of the husks surrounding the nuts. (If the smell is only faintly spicy, chances are that you have encountered a Butternut tree (*Juglans cinerea*), also known as "White Walnut" because of its lighter-colored wood (more about them later)).

The main edible products of Black Walnut trees are the ripe nuts, which are in season in this area in October. The nuts are surrounded by a spherical, green husk about 2 1/2

inches in diameter, about the same size and diameter as an old green tennis ball. (Butternut husks are the same size and shape as a fuzzy green goose egg.) Black Walnut trees will often drop some if not all their leaves before their nuts, which makes them easy to spot. There's no need to pick the nuts off the tree, though – wait until they hit the ground (but don't wait too long, or the squirrels will beat you to them). A typical Black Walnut tree produces dozens if not hundreds of nuts, which won't all ripen and fall off the tree at the same time, so you can typically gather a bunch of nuts under a tree and then go back a week or so later to gather those that have ripened and fallen in the meantime.

The first step in processing black walnuts is to remove the outer husks (with their distinctive spicy smell) from the shells. This is admittedly a not-very-pleasant task, as the inside of a fresh husk is yellowish and juicy, and touching this inner husk pulp with your bare hands will stain them brown for several weeks. Partially-rotted husks will be yellow with brown spots on the outside, with black pulp (which can also stain your skin) on the inside. Sometimes the decaying husks are colonized by little white maggots (fly larvae), which is understandably off-putting, but don't let them bother you as their presence does not in any way affect the nut inside the shell. (One fringe benefit to this is that the nastiness of the husk is such that most property owners around here consider the nuts a nuisance, and are more than happy to have you take as many as you want).

One technique some people use to get the husks off is to gather the nuts, husks and all, bring them home, roll them out on their driveway and run their car back and forth over them. (If you are lucky, you will find a Black Walnut tree growing near a roadway or parking lot, where other cars have already done that job for you, and you can just gather up the de-husked the shells with the ripe nuts inside.) The technique I use is simply to stomp on the husks where I find them under the tree, and then roll them around under my shoe to get most of the husk off.

Once you've got most of the husks off, you can remove any residue still clinging to the shells by filling up a five-gallon plastic bucket about halfway with nuts, then fill the bucket about 3/4 with water, and stir the nuts in the bucket with a garden stake or other stick to get the nuts knocking against each other and rubbing off the remaining husk bits into the water. Repeat if necessary. (By the way: I have found out that if I pour the "husk infused" water onto my back yard, the surface of my yard becomes covered with squirming earthworms and night crawlers several minutes later. I guess they are trying to escape from some chemical in the husks that they find unpleasant (if not toxic)).

The next step is to allow the de-husked Black Walnut shells to dry out thoroughly (by, e.g., spreading them out on top of newspaper on your garage floor) for at least several weeks (the nut meats will be tastier and easier to shell after they're thoroughly dried out). Once they're dried out, you can store unshelled Black Walnuts in a dry location for several months or longer without the nut meats inside getting rancid. Once you've shelled them, though, you should refrigerate (or, ideally, freeze) any shelled nut meats that you won't be using within a week or so.

Black Walnut shells are notoriously hard to crack open (the shells are in fact so hard that they are used commercially as an industrial abrasive). They will break most conventional nut crackers. A vise and/or hammer works fine, though. After some trial and error you will discover a way of cracking the nuts open to yield large pieces of nut meat and minimizes the time you need to spend with a nut pick prying out the embedded bits of nut meat from the shell.

Black Walnuts have a robust, aromatic and assertive flavor, considerably different from and much stronger than the cultivated, store-bought “English” (actually Persian) Walnut. Black Walnuts would not be good in any recipe which requires the nut flavor to fade into the background (because it won't). (Butternuts have a milder flavor.) On the other hand, Black Walnuts work well in recipes where there aren't a lot of other competing flavors. One easy and tasty way to use Black Walnuts is to make Black Walnut Honey Butter. Here's the simple recipe:

Black Walnut Honey Butter

Ingredients:

2 cups shelled Black Walnut meats

3/8 tsp. Salt

3 1/2 tbsp. Honey

(Please feel free to vary these proportions to suit your taste)

Spread the nut meats out on a baking tray and gently roast in a regular or toaster oven at 200 degrees F. for 1/2 hour - make sure that the nut meats don't burn or get overcooked.

Place the roasted nut meats in a food processor along with the salt and honey and blend for several minutes until well-mixed and peanut butter-like in texture (it will be somewhat grainier). Makes approximately 12 ounces.

Serve the nut butter warm to show off its unique fragrance. The aromatic black walnuts, saltiness of the salt and the sweetness of the honey will pull your taste buds in three different directions at once.

For a more challenging recipe (but equally tasty, and more impressive to serve to company or take to potlucks), I recommend this one:

Black Walnut Baklava

(This is posted online at <http://users.rcn.com/eatwild/recipes.htm>)

Let me wrap up this article with some miscellaneous tidbits:

- Black Walnut nutmeats are low in saturated fats, high in unsaturated (i.e., healthy) fats, and contain significant amounts of protein, Vitamins A, iron, minerals and fiber.
- Sometimes people make pickles from immature Black Walnuts or Butternuts (e.g., when a strong storm blows them off the trees). If a knitting needle can be pushed through one of the nuts, they are young and tender enough to be pickled.

- Both Black Walnut and Butternut trees contain sap which can be boiled down for syrup (but maple syrup is much tastier).
- Black Walnut husks provide one of the few natural dyes that do not require any mordant (fixative). The dye results in a light brown color. .
- The wood of black walnut is dark brown in color, easily worked, and is highly prized by furniture makers (and therefore commands a premium price).
- Both Black Walnut and Butternut roots, nut husks, and leaves secrete a allelopathic substance into the soil called juglone that inhibits the growth of some plant species, so you might want to exercise caution in composting your nut husks, or planting your vegetable garden within close proximity to either of these tree species. [That said: many species seem to have no trouble at all growing under Black Walnut trees; examples include Black Raspberry and Wild Lettuce.]

Where's ACROSS Lexington Route J?

By Eileen Entin

Are you ready to explore a new ACROSS route? Route J is a 1.7 mile loop situated in East Lexington, linking the Minuteman Bikeway with one of Lexington's lesser-known Conservation properties, Liberty Heights, and traversing several streets on the south side of Mass Avenue. The loop begins where the Bikeway intersects the Adams Playground, and heads to Mass Avenue via Ellen Dana Court. It then heads south past the Brown Homestead, a small, mostly wet conservation area named after Farmer Brown who, as a Minuteman, stood with Captain Parker on Lexington Green during the historic events at the start of the revolution in 1775. The route crosses Mass Ave at Oak Street and heads up the Oak Street hill. It turns left at Bruce Road, leading to the Liberty Heights Conservation Land, Lexington's smallest and one of the Town's least known conservation properties. The path through this wooded area is surrounded by mature red and white oak, ash, hickory and cherry trees. Route J emerges from Liberty Heights at Bowker Street, and winds its way down via several streets to Mass Ave and Taft St. where it crosses to Bow St. and thence to the Minuteman Bikeway, and leading back to the starting point on the Bikeway.

For those unfamiliar with the area, Route J provides an introduction to a hilly segment of East Lexington. Although it is one of the shortest ACROSS Lexington routes in length, several streets on the route are steep. But they are paved and the path through Liberty Heights is on a flat crushed stone walking surface. For those wanting a longer walk, Route J conveniently hooks up with Route B, another of the shorter ACROSS Lexington routes, along the Bikeway, offering an opportunity for a longer circular route for those who are so inclined.