



**Citizens for  
Lexington  
Conservation**

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**April, 2015**

**Kate Fricker, Editor**

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Red Maple winter buds



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## New Dues-Notification System

Citizens for Lexington Conservation is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization that relies on dues paid by members to cover its expenses. Look at your mailing label to check your membership status, as we have a new notification system. If you paid your dues in March 2015, your label will say Dues Paid Through March 2016. If it says "Dues paid through "MAR 2014" (or earlier), then it is time to renew your membership. If it says "Complimentary Copy," you are receiving a complimentary copy of our newsletter because you are a Town Meeting member or other public official in Lexington. We hope that those who receive complimentary copies will find our organization of value and will in time become dues-paying members. **To join CLC or renew your membership**, please send \$20.00 to Citizens for Lexington Conservation, P.O. Box 292, Lexington, MA 02420-0003. Dues may also be paid by credit card through PayPal from a link on our web site, <http://www.clclex.org>.

There is both a paper version and an electronic version of the CLC newsletter. The paper version is sent by bulk mail, which requires a minimum of 200 copies for each mailing in order to get the inexpensive bulk rate. The total costs of printing and mailing the snail mail version is about \$1.00 per copy. The e-mail version, on the other hand, sent as a link to the newsletter by e-mail, costs CLC nothing. The e-mail version of the newsletter has illustrations in color and live links. It also arrives much sooner than the snail mail version, and saves paper. In addition we don't have to apply the nasty seals the post office now requires on our snail mail copies. Ideally, we would send out exactly 200 snail mail copies and send the rest by e-mail. If you are currently receiving your newsletter by snail mail, but would like to get it by e-mail, (or if you would like to be removed from our mailing list) contact Judy Mello at. [jmacmello@comcast.net](mailto:jmacmello@comcast.net):

## CLC HAS A NEW LOGO

By Eileen Entin

As you can see on the cover page of this newsletter, Citizens for Lexington Conservation has a new logo! We are grateful to CLC member Margery Stegman of Schenkel/Stegman Communications Design for her work on the design, layout, and production of the new logo, which we believe captures the essence of CLC's mission of natural resource and environmental protection.

A subgroup of CLC Board members (Alex Dohan, Kate Fricker, and Eileen Entin) worked closely with Margery during the extensive logo development process. The process started by having the entire CLC Board respond to a questionnaire that Margery's firm uses to help clients think about their purpose and goals, as well as the position of their organization vis-à-vis other organizations with related goals. Margery and the CLC subgroup also looked at logos used by other conservation-related organizations, both to see how they represent themselves and also to be sure that whatever we decided upon was not too similar to another organization's logo. With that as a basis, Margery drafted four initial concepts, which the CLC subgroup reacted to, both in terms of design and color. We narrowed these to two concepts, which she then refined further, based on our reactions.

Two additional rounds of revisions followed, including how to integrate the logo with our name and details such as what typeface to use.

Our thanks to Margery for the many hours she spent designing and producing our new logo. We hope over time CLC members and others in our community will associate the logo with our organization and its mission: *Citizens for Lexington Conservation promotes the enjoyment and appreciation of our natural environment through education and advocacy.*

### **CLC ESTABLISHES THE BETSY WHITMAN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FUND**

By Eileen Entin

Thanks to donations made to Citizens for Lexington Conservation in memory of Betsy Whitman, Citizens for Lexington Conservation has created a fund for conservation and environmentally related classroom projects. Betsy, who passed away in 2013, was active in many Lexington projects such as recycling, the purchase of conservation land, and the Minuteman bikeway. CLC intends this fund to support grants to Lexington Public Schools teachers working with elementary school students to learn about the value and wonder of our natural resources, and the need to recognize, combat threats to, and preserve our resources and environment. Examples of candidate projects include enhancements to the Big Back Yard program; experiments to evaluate potential threats to air quality, animals, plants; research on threatened or endangered species; invasive plant mitigation; public service informational or educational programs.

Any elementary Lexington Public School teacher or staff member working with elementary school students may apply for a grant of up to \$300. The grant can be used to purchase supplies, instructional materials, to attend a workshop, or to bring in a special speaker.



Witch Hazel Blossom

The grant application can be downloaded from the CLC website ([www.clclex.org](http://www.clclex.org)). The deadline for proposals for the academic year is May 1. Awards will be announced by June 15. If appropriate, the funds may be used in the summer preceding or following the academic year. When completed, the purpose and results of grants that are made will be documented and posted on the CLC website.

## **CITIZENS FOR LEXINGTON CONSERVATION 2015 SPRING WALKS**

### **Saturday, April 18, 11– 12 Noon Butterfly Walk at Arlington's Great Meadow**

Participants will meet in the parking lot at Golden Living Center – Lexington, at 840 Emerson Gardens Rd. (off Maple Street) in East Lexington. The parking lot is on the right side of the facility, and drivers should park at the far end. This walk will be co-sponsored by Citizens for Lexington Conservation and the Massachusetts Butterfly Club. Butterfly enthusiast Tom Whelan will lead a walk to see two species of spring butterflies, Brown and Henry's Elfins. These small, easily overlooked butterflies are found in many parts of the United States and Canada. Since these species overwinter in the chrysalis stage, they begin their adult lives as butterflies. If time permits, additional insects will be sought at adjacent Infinity Pond, a certified vernal pool. People of all ages are welcome; children must be with an adult. Please sign up for the walk in advance, preferably by email ([tom@whelanphoto.com](mailto:tom@whelanphoto.com)) or phone (781-915-9988). Walk Leader, Tom Whelan, will notify those who sign up if the weather requires cancelling the event.

### **Wednesday, May 6, 8 -10 AM Bird Walk at Dunback Meadow**

Meet at the Allen Street entrance to Dunback Meadow. In early May we are in the midst of several weeks of migration as many species of birds quickly head north to their breeding grounds as well as the many birds who come to this area to spend the summer. In addition, we may find some of our residential birds, such as woodpeckers and hawks. Although the ground is slightly rough, the pace is slow so the walk is accessible to most. Children with adults and beginners are welcome. We will enjoy a varied habitat, including mixed woods, open fields, and a stream. Bring binoculars if you have them. Boots are recommended if there has been rain recently. Rain or lightning will cancel the walk.

Walk leader: Bobbie Hodson ([robertahodson@comcast.net](mailto:robertahodson@comcast.net); 781-861-9421)

### **Saturday, May 9, 8 – 10 AM Warbler Walk in Lower Vine Brook**

Meet at 116 Vine Street; call if you are lost. Check out the spring warbler migration in the Lower Vine Brook conservation area. Warblers are small, beautiful tropical birds that come north to breed. Many different species of warbler stop off in this sheltered area on their way to the forests in northern New England and Canada. Some stay, but as trees leaf they are more difficult to see. In the spring, depending on the weather and the foliage, you can sometimes find a dozen species in a morning. Children with adults are welcome. Bring warm clothes, boots if it's wet, binoculars, and a bird book. No dogs. More than light rain or lightning will cancel the event. If the weather is uncertain call the leader. Walk Leader: Harry West ([hwest2020@gmail.com](mailto:hwest2020@gmail.com); 617-461-9500 mobile)

### **Thursday, May 14, Start at 4 PM**

### **ACROSS Lexington's Routes C & D**

Meet at the Bikeway parking lot off Bow Street where the Minuteman Bikeway crosses. Join us for a guided walk on ACROSS Lexington's newest routes. There will be an option part way through the walk to stay on Route C for an earlier return around 5:30 or branch off to Route D with an estimated return of 6:30 for those who want the full experience. Walk Leaders: Eileen Entin ([eileenhome@gmail.com](mailto:eileenhome@gmail.com); 781-862-6418), Bob Hausslein ([rhausslein@rcn.com](mailto:rhausslein@rcn.com); 781-862-9102).

**Saturday, May 16, 8 – 10 AM**

**Birds of Willard's Woods**

Meet at Willard's Woods parking lot off North Street. We will hope to catch the peak of the spring migration with opportunities for warblers and flycatchers. We'll also look for nesting residents such as Indigo Bunting, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Pine Warbler. Willard's Woods has good trails on level ground. We will stop early if we encounter heavy rain. Walk Leader: John Andrews ([jandrews166@gmail.com](mailto:jandrews166@gmail.com); 781-862-6498)

**Thursday, May 21, 2 – 3 PM**

**Pond Exploration at Parker Meadow**

**Geared for children in grades K – 5 accompanied by an adult.**

Meet at the Revere St. entrance to Parker Meadow. Limited parking is there; additional parking is available on neighborhood streets across Revere Street. Join Fran Ludwig for a prowl around Parker Meadow to look for signs of beavers, bugs, tadpoles, frogs and toads. We'll dip a net into the water to see what kinds of critters are wriggling around below the surface. Bring rain boots if you have them, and be prepared to get dirty. If you have a small bug box or magnifier, bring it along. Rain or lightning will cancel the event. Walk Leader: Fran Ludwig ([Fludwig12@yahoo.com](mailto:Fludwig12@yahoo.com); 781-861-7231)

All walks are free and open to the public

Maps of conservation lands can be found at <http://www.lexingtonma.gov/conservation/conland.cfm>

**THE GAME OF LOGGING:  
CHAIN SAW TRAINING FOR CONSERVATION STEWARDS**

By Steve Hill

I'm no stranger to bucking logs. For twenty years I cut & split dozens of cord for the old wood stove we had. What more was there to know, I wondered? Quite a bit, it turns out.

At 8 am sharp on a frigid November morning nine of us Steward 'trainees' braced ourselves against the wind sweeping across the Poor Farm conservation site. We gathered to attend the Game of Logging, level 1, which was effectuated by conservation coordinator Jordan McCarron as a means of strengthening the stewards' skill sets.

"What is this Game of Logging?" I wondered, while stuffing another chemical heat pouch into my pocket. The instructor, Bill Gerard, explained that it is a premiere chainsaw safety and productivity training course, divided into four levels. In fact, it is the same training format as is given to government agencies, professional forestry loggers, and arborist in general.

Bill started with the finer points of how a chainsaw works. He spent considerable time explaining how a chain tooth actually cuts wood, which is a surprisingly complex operation. Next, we learned that there are just two correct ways to start a saw, neither of which was the dangerous "drop & pull" technique I had always used. Bill's deep knowledge was impressive. His meticulous instruction revolved around proven 'best' practices that are

designed to maximize user safety awareness. Time and again, it all came back to the fact that being safe and being efficient is one and the same.

After two intensive hours learning the basics, Bill moved us to the hands-on phase. A stack of storm damaged and downed logs had been placed at one corner of the Poor Farm. Here, we practiced various bucking techniques (“Bucking” is forestry slang for cutting.), learned how to calculate where a tree is most likely to fall, and how to perform this work safely. The training was both group and individually focused.

One Land Steward function is keeping Lexington’s miles of gorgeous trails open to the general public. This occasionally involves removal of blow-down, decayed and rotted trees, and other types of blockage. Our Game of Logging training will come in handy here, and Bill had us practice those tricks and techniques necessary to deal with such issues. The work we thus performed generated some much appreciated body heat, and the rest of the daylight hours flew by.

The Game of Logging fits well with the multifarious training the Lexington Land Stewards receive. It is always interesting, enlightening and appreciated. For me, this was an educational opportunity that not only enhanced my effectiveness as a Land Steward, but also was a fun way to improve my mechanical knowledge and revamp old work habits for the better.

A special thanks to Jordan McCarron for facilitating this, and a nod to the town for hosting it.

To find out more about becoming a Conservation Steward, contact Jordan McCarron in the Conservation office at: [jmccarron@lexingtonma.gov](mailto:jmccarron@lexingtonma.gov), 781-862-0500 ext. 84505.

### **RED MAPLE TREES**

by Kate Fricker



Young Red Maple Seeds

According to the Lexington Tree Inventory, the Red Maple is the third commonest tree in Lexington, ranking after the Norway Maple and the Northern Red Oak. The tree deserves its name, as it is known for its flaming red leaves in early autumn, the red tips of its twigs in winter and its red female flowers in early spring. The immature seeds are red, too, when they first develop. Red maple seeds grow in pairs, with the two seeds attached at one end and the wings flaring out, providing a nose-hanger that delights small children. .

Children also enjoy launching seed “helicopters” and watching them flutter to the ground.

Red Maples are native to New England, where they prefer our acid soil and access to dampness. A typical New England swamp is surrounded by red maple trees. There they brighten the early fall with their display of fall colors. If you look closely at the structure of a red maple you will see that both the leaves and twigs grow outward, opposite each other, giving the tree a nice symmetry. Leaves of the red maple are described as palmate, like the palm of a hand.

In the winter I have watched chickadees flying relays between my bird feeder and the nearest red maple tree. A full grown red maple has cracks that tend to split parallel to the circumference of the tree, instead of splitting inward, making nice storage pockets for seeds.

By the time this newsletter comes out the red maple blossoms will have fallen, but you can still look up on a sunny day to see striking red seeds against the blue sky.

### **IMPROVING OUR ROADSIDE VISTAS**

by Bonnie Newman, Steward Director, Lexington Conservation Stewards

When we consider our conservation areas, most of us think of protected open space and trail access. Often what gets neglected is that part of the property that we see most often—the view from the local street.

In the 1980's, neighbors banded together to save the 8-acre Daisy Wilson meadow with its beautiful stone wall along Moreland Avenue. A well-used path connects Moreland Avenue, Pinewood Street, and Sunset Ridge, and the meadow of the former farm has been mowed by neighbor and lead steward, Steve Wallis.

By 2013, while the trail and meadow were well maintained, the striking stone wall along Moreland Avenue had deteriorated and become almost invisible, the area overgrown with bittersweet, multiflora rose and poison ivy. Trees were in danger of falling from the overgrowth. And it had become an eyesore as people drove by.

Now Daisy Wilson is serving as a model of a new stewardship effort to improve our roadside vistas. As a first step, in December 2013, Steve teamed up with neighbor and stew-



Red Maple Autumn Color

ard director, Bonnie Newman, and we organized a neighborhood cleanup with participants from eight homes along the road. It was a visible improvement in a multi-year project.

The town worked to keep the vegetation in check in front of the newly exposed stone wall over the summer of 2014. We organized a second major cleanup in December 2014, with 12 neighbors, and the town helped by leaving a truck bay where we could dump refuse, which the DPW hauled away. (We used special removal techniques for the bitter-sweet.)

What are the next steps? The neighborhood group is ready for additional workdays to keep the overgrowth in check, and replace some of the fallen stones in the wall. We are also working with the conservation office to complete the necessary permitting process. The town, for its part, has put the project in the FY16 budget, and, if approved, plans to replace the top layer of soil in front of the wall, which will eliminate the invasive species seedbank and root growth from the area, and replace it with weed block and natural woodchips to inhibit future growth in front of the stone wall.

And Daisy Wilson Meadow will be not only a valued conservation area, with trail access, but also serve as an attractive entry into the neighborhood, cared for by its neighbors and the town.

What other conservation roadside vistas need improvement? We hope that Daisy Wilson can serve as a model, and that neighbors can take the first step to notify the conservation office of "vista" issues and then work with the town to make a difference in their local area.

### **A SNOWSHOE WALK WITH CLC**

by Judy Mello

Have you ever wanted to try snowshoeing but were afraid to take a chance? Let me give you my first-hand experience.

CLC was having a snowshoe walk through Burlington's Land Locked Forest and since I am interested in conservation, I decided to try it and bought snowshoes. My first concerns included many what ifs: What if I fall down and can't get up? What if my snowshoes come undone? What if I can't keep up with the group? etc. As it turned out, none of my concerns were a problem. I was in a group of 10 friendly and experienced people with Keith Ohmart as our helpful and informative guide. Every so often we stopped to look around and were given details of the area. If someone's snowshoe came off, we would hear "wait up," and once fixed, we would be on our way as a group again. The air was crisp and cold; the sun was shining, and I found I stayed very comfortably warm. Our walk went through the forest and fields; the path at times was straight, curved, level or slightly hilly.

Now that spring is around the corner, my snowshoes will go into hibernation until next year when I will be ready to explore in winter many of the conservation areas in Lexington

and surrounding towns. I hope you will join us and find the walks to be fun and pleasurable.

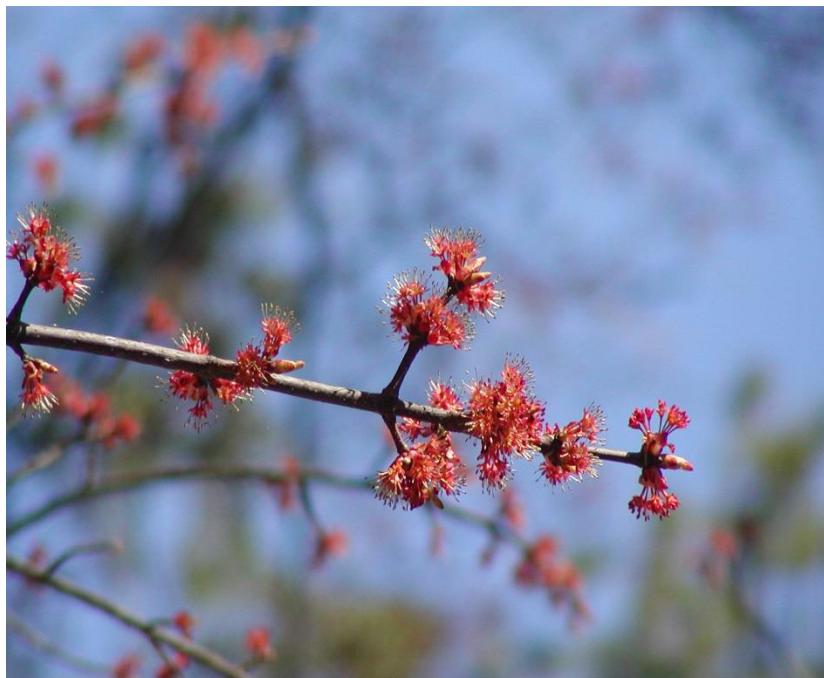
## WHERE DO ALL THOSE BIRDS GO FOR THE WINTER?

By Bobbie Hodson

Where do all those spring-summer birds go? For that matter where do those few winter snowbirds who visit go during the summer? What about those birds who sail through in May on their way north and slowly return through our woods during the late summer as they head south? And, finally, what happens to those many breeders who enjoy the insects and seeds while breeding in our fields and woods?

We could classify most of “our” birds into three categories: residents, migrants, and migrating breeders. Residents live here year round, brave our tough winters and breed here during our spring and summer. We know well most of them, such as the Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Goldfinch, Blue Jay, American Crow, Red-tailed Hawk, and Mourning Dove.

Then there are the migrants that pass through but don’t breed here. These include the Olive-sided Flycatcher with its dark vest and the Blackburnian Warbler with its golden throat. Both of these birds spend their breeding days in the northern New England states and Canada, and migrate back through on their way to South America.



Red Maple Blossoms

The migrating breeders fly here from the southern U.S. and Central and South America. Included in this group are many of our favorites, such as our early migrants, the Red-winged Blackbird and Phoebe, who come from our southern states; the Marsh Wren and Robin that come in early spring; and the breeding warblers, Yellow Warbler and Common Yellow-throated Warbler, which arrive in May from south of the United States. All stay for many months to breed and raise their young, then de-

part in early fall for their winter habitats. The Tree Swallow arrives in April, breeds, then by August groups into masses of thousands and flies south in September.

Then there are the ducks most of which we see as migrants. Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, and Eider arrive for the winter from the north to use the unfrozen ocean. Many

breeding ducks, such as the Wood Duck, arrive in March and depart once the water starts to freeze. Many of our March-April and later September-October ducks, such as Pintail and Green-winged Teal migrate through our fresh waters, fatten up and move to the northern U.S. and Canada to breed, and then return here for several weeks until the lakes and rivers freeze and they head to the middle and southern Atlantic states for the winter. Although a loon is not a duck, it does migrate to the ocean from inland when the water freezes.

A few land birds come to our area from the north for the winter. Included in this group are our feeder birds, such as Juncos, which breed in the northern U.S. and Canada; and rarer birds, such as White-winged Crossbills, Northern Shrike, and Snowy Owls.

At any season there are many birds on our land and waters. Since there are over 300 birds in Massachusetts during the year, this short write-up is just the beginning of exploring birds and their journeys. Each has a unique story of habitat, breeding, migrating, and feeding. Each can be a delight to view.

### **THE JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAM – 2015**

By Bobbie Hodson

Last summer we started the Junior Ranger Program, which includes a 9-page booklet for children and their guiding adults to use while exploring our Lexington conservation lands. Available from the CLC website, this booklet contains many fun games oriented to increase awareness of the fauna and flora within the wilder parts of Lexington. Once the child completes the activities and signs the “Lexington Ranger Pledge” to keep our natural areas safe for all, the child can then receive an official JUNIOR RANGER CERTIFICATE at the Community Development office in Town Hall.

### **ORGANIZATIONS IN NEIGHBORING TOWNS THAT GIVE WALKS AND/OR EVENTS OF INTEREST**

Bedford Conservation Land Stewards: <http://www.nemow.net/BedfordStewards.html>

Belmont Citizens Forum: <http://www.belmontcitizensforum.org>

Bicycling in Lexington: <http://www.hbingham.com/lexbike/index.htm>

Brookline Bird Club: <http://www.brooklinebirdclub.org>

Charles River Watershed Association: <http://www.crwa.org>

Friends of Alewife Reservation: <http://friendsofalewifereservation.org/events.htm>

Friends of Arlington's Great Meadow in Lexington: <http://www.foagm.org>

Friends of Fresh Pond: <http://www.friendsoffreshpond.org/upcomingprograms.htm>

Friends of the Bikeway: <http://www.minutemanbikeway.org/Pages/Introduction.html>

Friends of Cummings Park in Burlington: <http://www.cummingspark.org>

Friends of the Middlesex Fells: <http://www.friendsofthefells.org/events-calendar/>

Guide to the Winchester Woodlands: <http://www.winchestermass.org/oldwoodguid.html>

Habitat (Mass Audubon):

<http://www.massaudubon.org/get-outdoors/wildlife-sanctuaries/habitat>

Healthy Waltham: <http://www.healthy-waltham.org/waltham-city-walks/>

Lexington Conservation Stewards:

<http://www.lexingtonma.gov/conservation/stewards.cfm>

Lexington Global Warming Action Coalition: <http://www.lexgwac.org>

Lincoln Land Conservation: <http://www.lincolnconservation.org>

Maps of Lexington Conservation Areas:

<http://www.lexingtonma.org/conservation/Lands/Conslandkey.html>

Massachusetts Audubon Society: <http://www.massaudubon.org>

Menotomy Bird Club: <http://www.mrines.com/menotomy>

Menotomy Bird Club: <http://mrines.com/menotomy/Trips.htm>

Mystic River Watershed Association: <http://www.mysticriver.org>

Shawsheen River Watershed association: <http://www.Shawsheen.org>

The Nature Conservancy: <http://www.nature.org>

Trail Link: <http://www.traillink.com/city/bedford-ma-trails.aspx>

Waltham Land Trust: <http://walthamlandtrust.org/events>

## ACROSS LEXINGTON ADDS TWO NEW LOOP WALKS

By Kevin Breunig, member of Greenways Corridor Committee



Jack-in-the-Pulpit

Two new loop walks through Lexington are now open, just in time for spring. The Lexington Greenways Corridor Committee has completed these trails as part of *ACROSS Lexington: The Rick Abrams Memorial Trail Network*. ACROSS Lexington offers residents an opportunity for exercise and outdoor enjoyment while exploring the town's beautiful conservation lands and historic points of interest.

The new 2.6-mile "C" loop runs through Arlington's Great Meadows, the largest area of undeveloped land in Lexington and home to 400 plant and animal species.

The loop continues past the meadows into East Lexington neighborhoods, and skirts the western side of the Arlington Reservoir. The trail is easily accessible from the Cataldo Reservation parking lot off Bow Street or the Arlington Reservoir parking lot on Summer Street.

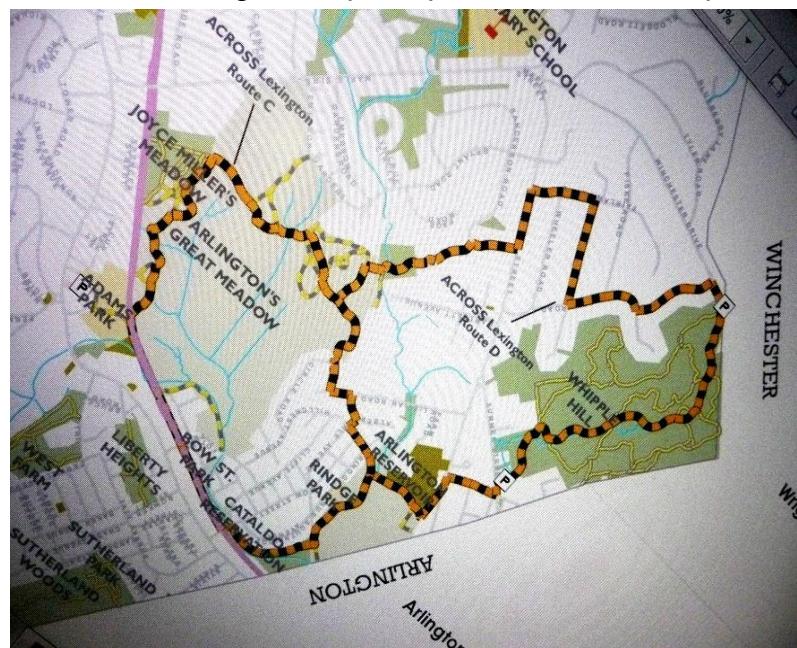
The 3.4-mile "D" loop runs through Lexington's Whipple Hill conservation area and connects with the LexFarm property. Its eastern side runs along sections of Orchard, Fairlawn, and Locke Lane, and its southern end is shared with the route of the "C" loop.

Convenient access is available at the Johnson Road entrance to Whipple Hill and also at the Arlington Reservoir lot.

"We invite Lexington residents to get out and enjoy these trails, and use them as an opportunity to discover our town's conservation lands," said Keith Ohmart, chair of the Greenways Corridor Committee. A guided walk of the new routes will take place during Bike/Walk/Bus Week (May 9-17) at 4 pm on Thursday May 14. Meet at the parking lot for the Cataldo Reservation off Bow Street adjacent to the Minuteman Bikeway.

Maps of the entire 16-mile ACROSS Lexington trail network will soon be available at [www.acrosslexington.org](http://www.acrosslexington.org). A new brochure, featuring the map, points of interest, and history of the trail network will also be available by late April through local businesses, Cary Library, the town Information Center, and the Conservation Department in Town Hall.

ACROSS Lexington (which stands for Accessing Conservation land, Recreation areas, Open space, Schools and Streets in Lexington) is intended to encourage greater utilization of Lexington's open-space resources for passive recreation. Residents and visitors alike will find enjoyment, exercise and an incentive to travel about town without a car.



Additional work will take place this year to connect the Minuteman Bikeway with the Battle Road Trail in the Minuteman National Historical Park, the Meagherville Conservation area and the Hayden Recreation Center, adding another 3+ miles to the trails network, according to Ohmart. The Greenways Committee is also considering ways to further extend the trails network to connect the town's Wright Farm, Paint Mine

and Simonds Brook Conservation properties, and to link the "B" loop with the Western Greenway Trail on the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Beaver Brook North property.

Created by the Lexington Board of Selectmen in 2011, the Lexington Greenways Corridor Committee is charged with identifying, actively planning, and recommending the implementation of pedestrian, bicycle and other greenways corridors linking Town Conservation, Recreation and other open space parcels in addition to establishing links to regional trail systems and open space in neighboring communities.

## **MARY CUMMINGS PARK IN BURLINGTON**

By Cynthia John

On the first Saturday of each month, rain or shine, there is a nature walk at Mary Cummings Park. There is a different guest each month, with subjects ranging from wildflowers to animal tracking. Burlington photographer Jon Sachs usually hosts the walks. He has extensive experience with nature photography, particularly close-ups of flowers and insects. We all gather at the parking lot for the new soccer field on Blanchard Road, near the big blue water tower. Check out the map and other information on the web site, <http://www.cummingspark.org>. The park has a wide variety of habitats, from fields to forest to wetlands, and there are endless subjects for photography in every season. For more information you can email Jon Sachs at [jon@jonsachs.com](mailto:jon@jonsachs.com), or leave a message at 781-272-1989.

## **THE BOSTON GREENBELT WALK of 2015**

By Laurel Carpenter

On Saturday, May 30, 2015, Lexington will host a portion of the Boston Greenbelt Walk 2015. The walk begins and ends at public transportation centers and primarily follows local trails. The walk is co-organized by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and Freewalkers, along with the collaboration of many local groups. Walkers can choose distances ranging from 4 to 32 miles. You can use this link for more information <http://www.bostongreenbeltwalk.org/>

Local groups supporting this year's walk include ACROSS Lexington, Waltham Land Trust, Newton Conservators, Friends of Mary Cummings Park (Woburn/Burlington), Wellesley Trails Committee, Friends of the Middlesex Fells, and the Charles River Link (a 16-mile regional trail).

The walk begins at Waban or Riverside Station in Newton and includes a rest stop in Lexington Center. The Lexington portion of the route primarily follows ACROSS Lexington Routes and travels through a variety of our conservation areas. For this year's walk, the route will be temporarily flagged. Volunteers are needed to help with the flagging and the removal of the flags after the event. For more local information or to volunteer, please contact Laurel Carpenter at [lcarp@rcn.com](mailto:lcarp@rcn.com)

## **The Perils of Pollinators**

by Fran Ludwig

One of life's greatest pleasures is a leisurely stroll through the open fields at Dunback Meadow, Hennessey Field or Willard's Woods in mid summer. The air is abuzz with bee activity and if you are lucky, you may see a monarch float by in search of nectar. Bees, butterflies, moths, beetles and flies are among organisms whose size belies their important role in ecosystems. The ecological service these pollinators provide is essential for the reproduction of over 85% of the world's flowering plants. Fruits and seeds resulting from insect pollination are a major part of the diet of approximately 25% of all birds, and of mammals ranging from voles to grizzly bears. In addition, two out of three bites of

human food depend on the work of insects. The recent decline in bee and butterfly populations raises concerns about how humans might be impacting these essential animals.

In particular, agricultural pesticides have been suspected as a contributor to the decline of bees. One class of chemicals that have recently been called into question is neonicotinoids. Neonicotinoids (neonics for short) are synthetic chemicals based on the natural insecticide, nicotine, which is produced by the **tobacco** plant. Neonicotinoids are absorbed by a plant and transferred through its tissues, making the plant itself and its pollen and nectar toxic to insects. Some studies show honeybees exposed to neonics can experience problems with flying and navigation, reduced taste sensitivity, and slower learning of new tasks, which all impact foraging ability. In bumblebees reduced food consumption, reproduction, worker survival rates, and foraging activity have been noted. A recent study also documented the harmful effects of neonics on monarch butterfly caterpillars. Chemical industry giants such as Bayer, producer of neonics, claim that field studies at lower dosages do not confirm these claims. There is no direct link demonstrated between neonics and the honey bee syndrome known as Colony Collapse Disorder. However, recent research suggests that neonicotinoids may make honeybees more susceptible to the parasites and pathogens that have been implicated.

Though the EPA has recently approved certain neonic pesticides, an agency report on bees and pesticides is not scheduled until 2018. Groups such as Xerces and The Task Force on Systemic Pesticides <http://www.tfsp.info/findings/insect-pollinators/> and 120 other organizations are urging restraint in approving neonic pesticides until there is a reassessment of all products for bee safety.

#### What you can do:

1. Support the Saving America's Pollinators Act of 2015 (H.R. 2692), calling for the suspension of neonicotinoids, until a full review of scientific evidence indicates they are safe and a field study demonstrates they have no damaging sub-lethal effects on pollinators.  
<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/114/hr1284> Sign the Pesticide Action Network petition to lawmakers:<https://takeaction.takepart.com/actions/help-save-our-bees-tell-congress-to-support-the-saving-america-s-pollinators-act?cmpid=action-eml-2015-03-10-bees>
2. Use native plants that are organically grown in your garden to attract pollinators:  
Pollinator Partnership: <http://www.dpollinator.org/index.html>  
New England: Native Garden Plants to Attract Pollinators:  
<http://www.pollinator.org/PDFs/Guides/Adirondackrx3FINAL.pdf>  
BEE Smart Pollinator App: <http://www.pollinator.org/beesmartapp.htm>  
BEE Protective: Managing Landscapes with Pollinators in Mind:  
<http://www.beyondpesticides.org/pollinators/LandscapesforPollinators.php>  
BumbleBee Watch Citizen Science Project: <http://www.bumblebeewatch.org>
3. Since some products containing neonicotinoids can legally be applied in far greater concentrations in gardens than they can be on farms, protect pollinators by avoiding the use of these insecticides. Ask your local nursery or garden center if plants have been

treated with neonicotinoids, and encourage your town to use alternatives to neonicotinoids on plants that are visited by bees or are bee-pollinated. The following report lists neonic garden chemicals and brands: Are Neonicotinoids Killing Bees  
<http://www.xerces.org/neonicotinoids-and-bees/>

**Monarch butterflies are also considered pollinators. As noted in the Fall CLC newsletter, monarchs are at risk due to massive loss of habitat** related to the use of glyphosate (Monsanto's Roundup) on herbicide resistant GMO crops (80% of processed foods contain corn and soy grown this way). The loss of milkweed due to herbicide application in the mid-west, and other factors such as climate change has decimated monarch numbers. Recent studies by the World Health Organization have cautioned that glyphosate, the key ingredient Roundup may be carcinogenic, so there is concern for humans as well as monarchs. In addition, resistance to Roundup is developing in some plants and Duo, a combination of glyphosate and 2,4, D has now been approved by the EPA.

The population of overwintering monarchs in Mexico increased slightly this year, but it is still among the all time low counts at only 20% of the numbers 20 years ago. On March 24 Mexican observers reported that the monarch colonies were breaking up and northward migration had begun, 2 weeks later than average. By the end of April these "old" monarchs—the ones we saw in Lexington in September, perhaps—mate, lay eggs and die. The first generation of monarchs will be determined by the conditions in the southern tier of states especially in Texas. The climate induced drought there has impacted the growth of milkweed, the only food monarch caterpillars eat. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in response to thousands of citizen requests to consider monarchs a threatened species have funded projects to replace monarch habitat by preserving and planting milkweed. People are becoming more vocal about protecting our pollinators.



Monarch Butterfly

#### What you can do:

1. Plant milkweed and nectar plants for monarchs. If you buy plants at a garden center, be sure that they do not contain pesticide!! Allow wild milkweed to grow on your property. If you have a lot, cut some back to the ground in mid summer to provide fresh new shoots for August's monarch caterpillars.

Fish and Wildlife: <http://www.fws.gov/savethemonarch/>

Protecting Monarchs: <http://www.pollinator.org/PDFs/NAPPC.Monarch.broch.ver8.pdf>

Plant for monarchs:

[http://monarchjointventure.org/images/uploads/documents/WFM\\_Brochure\\_final.pdf](http://monarchjointventure.org/images/uploads/documents/WFM_Brochure_final.pdf)

Create Habitat for Monarchs: <http://monarchjointventure.org/get-involved/create-habitat-for-monarchs/>

2.[http://blog.nwf.org/2015/02/saving-monarchs/?s\\_email\\_id=20150307\\_MEM\\_ENG\\_Habitat\\_News\\_March\\_Edition%7CSTCat](http://blog.nwf.org/2015/02/saving-monarchs/?s_email_id=20150307_MEM_ENG_Habitat_News_March_Edition%7CSTCat)

[http://blog.nwf.org/2015/02/saving-monarchs/?s\\_email\\_id=20150307\\_MEM\\_ENG\\_Habitat\\_News\\_March\\_Edition%7CSTCat](http://blog.nwf.org/2015/02/saving-monarchs/?s_email_id=20150307_MEM_ENG_Habitat_News_March_Edition%7CSTCat)

3. Help to track monarchs by reporting your sightings at :

<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch/>

The perils of pollinators serve as a bellwether for environmental problems that pose risks to our food supply, to the vibrant natural places that are home to bees and monarchs, and to our own health. It's up to us to be a voice for their sake and ours.

### **CLC ANNUAL MEETING, APRIL 2, 2015 – JOAN WALSH, SPEAKER**

By Alex Dohan

At the annual meeting on April 2, 2015, Joan Walsh, the Director of Bird Monitoring at Mass Audubon, spoke on the State of the Birds in Massachusetts. She began with a brief overview of the history of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, which was started by Harriet Hemenway and Minna Hall in 1896 as a way to combat the widespread slaughter of birds for the purpose of gathering feathers to decorate hats. Walsh likened the work of Mass Audubon to that of a museum, in which special treasures are protected and cared for. The difference is that if you visit a museum you can expect to see particular pieces on display, but if you visit a sanctuary, there is no guarantee that you will see the birds you seek.

Walsh spoke entertainingly about the research that went into the production of the Breeding Bird Atlas, and gave brief updates on various species of birds. She talked about the decline of the Meadowlark as forests grow up where once there were fields, and also about the increase in numbers of both Hairy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers. Change in habitat and change in climate are both factors that come into play in these situations. The Salt Marsh Sparrow is in a particularly hard place as the salt marshes where the birds nest may not respond quickly to climate-induced tidal changes, leading to habitat loss. Loss of farmland and loss of multi-age forests are a problem for many birds, but Great Blue Herons are increasing in Massachusetts, perhaps partly due to wetland protections that our state takes very seriously. You can see a fairly new Heron rookery below Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord. Many other species also had significant changes in breeding populations.

The Breeding Bird Atlas is updated approximately every 25 years. All of the data is available online.

Walsh left the audience with a few pieces of advice:

Keep cats indoors – they kill songbirds.

Support local farmers – this keeps farmland open as habitat.

Go outside – pay attention to birds and their habits.

### **PHOTO CREDITS**

Pages 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 15 – Kate Fricker