



# **Citizens for Lexington Conservation**

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**September, 2008**  
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Citizens for Lexington Conservation is a non-profit organization that relies on dues paid by members to cover its expenses. Look at your mailing label to check your membership status. If it says "Dues paid 2008," you are up to date. If it says "Dues paid 2007" (or earlier), then it is time to renew your membership for 2008. 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 become dues-paying members. To join CLC or renew your membership send \$15.00 to CLC, P.O. Box 292, Lexington, MA 02420-0003.

There is an electronic version of the CLC newsletter, sent by email with a link to the newsletter. This version of the newsletter has illustrations in color and live links, it arrives much sooner than the snail mail version, it saves paper, and it costs CLC about \$1 less per copy. If you are currently receiving your newsletter by snail mail, but would like to get it by e-mail, contact Kate Fricker at [kfricker@alum.swarthmore.edu](mailto:kfricker@alum.swarthmore.edu)

### CLC Publications

Over the years CLC has encouraged members to write guides to the open spaces in Lexington. These guides have now been scanned and are available at no charge on our web site, <http://www.lexingtonma.org/clc/HomePage.htm>. You may also use the web site to contact us about conservation-related happenings or sightings of unusual birds and wildlife that we can use on our web site and in our newsletter.



**Did you know** that Lexington's Tophet Swamp is the first of a string of five Tophet Swamps extending at 10-15 mile intervals along a major colonial era axis of braided roads stretching from Boston to Keene NH? The fifth and final swamp of this name is located in New Ipswich NH. Source: "*Sightseeking*" by Christopher J. Lenney, University Press of New England.

The CLC newsletter would welcome contributions of other tidbits of interest to Lexington readers. Send your favorites to [kfricker@alum.swarthmore.edu](mailto:kfricker@alum.swarthmore.edu).

### Photo Credits:

Map of Lot 1: Bob Kingston

Photos of Mushrooms: Guests at Wohelo Family Camp

## Fall Walks 2008

### **Country Walk in Lexington** Saturday, October 4, 1:00 pm

Explore five conservation areas during this 3-4 hour ramble through the Lexington countryside that will take us from Lexington center to the Burlington line and back. Discover forestland, meadows, ponds and streams that form one of the town's more extensive greenbelts. Meet at 1 pm behind the Sherwin Williams paint store on the Minuteman Bikeway.

Trip Leader - Keith Ohmart (781-862-6216)

### **Workday at Lower Vinebrook** October 11, 8:30 am

The Conservation Stewards in cooperation with the Bicycle Advisory Committee will be sponsoring a final workday on October 11 to complete this season's work in the Lower Vine Brook area. Two reasonably short sections of boardwalk are planned along with some trail clearing to reopen a little used section of trail and close a section of trail that will no longer be used. Meet at the Utica Street trail entrance (From Mass Ave take Woburn Street to Utica Street.) at 8:30 am. As always, tools, water and lunch will be provided. This project will also qualify for all LHS and Waldorf community service hours requirements.

For questions contact Mike Tabaczynski. at 781-929-8748.

### **Arlington's Great Meadow** September 20, and October 18, (the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturdays of the month) 9:30-11:30 am

**Join us** to see nature in Arlington's Great Meadows. We will emphasize plants (since they don't run away or fly away), but we'll look for birds and other natural wonders, too. We'll see how the natural landscape is changing as the seasons pass. We'll see dry upland areas and lower wetland areas (along the boardwalk – no boots needed). **Adults and teens are welcome, as are children accompanied by at least one of their parents.** Don Miller of Friends of Arlington's Great Meadow will be the leader. Other nature enthusiasts may join us to share their knowledge, too. And beginners are always encouraged, of course. **Please Bring:** Hat for sun; insect repellent; binoculars and a hand lens, if you have them. Sneakers will be fine – but no flip-flops, please. Long pants are encouraged.



**Location:** Meet in the parking lot of the Golden LivingCenter-Lexington. From Maple Street, turn onto Emerson Gardens Road and follow it to the end. Enter the facility's driveway (slowly, please) and continue around to the right, keeping the building on your left. Proceed to the end of the parking lot. For information contact [donaldbmiller@comcast.net](mailto:donaldbmiller@comcast.net), 781-646-4965. Sponsored by the Friends of Arlington's Great Meadow. Find us at [www.FoAGM.org](http://www.FoAGM.org)

### **Nature Walk for all ages - A remedy for craziness and other cool plants**

Thursday October 16, 2-4:30 pm

Join naturalist Boot Boutwell for a nature walk through Lexington conservation land which surrounds Whipple Hill. We'll begin by scaling Whipple Hill, the highest point in Lexington, (374 ft. above sea level). Don't worry, it's an easy walk. The summit offers wonderful views of the sur-

rounding countryside. The trail descends through a hardwood forest to Little's Pond. Along the way we'll search for a plant that the Chippewa Indians used as a remedy for craziness, plants that can be used for herbal tea, and the Indian soap plant. The walk will focus on plant identification as well as fun and interesting natural history. Meet at the parking area for Whipple Hill at the end of Winchester Drive in Lexington just before the Winchester line.

Leader: Boot Boutwell (781-729-4712)

**Bird Walk at Arlington Reservoir** Saturday, October 25, 8:00 to 10:00 am

Meet at the Rindge Avenue playground basketball court. We'll be looking especially for waterfowl (ducks!). Wear comfortable water resistant boots/shoes.

Leader: Chris Floyd (781-862-2841) or [chrisf@mitre.org](mailto:chrisf@mitre.org)

Watch the *Lexington Minuteman* newspaper or the Citizens for Lexington Conservation website (<http://lexingtonma.org/clc/HomePage.htm>) for more information.

## Lot 1 Success

by Keith Ohmart

What began as a daunting up-hill struggle almost exactly four years ago to preserve Lot 1 is now a reality. As this year's legislative session drew to a close in July, Governor Patrick affixed his signature to a bill transferring the Lexington portion of Lot 1 to the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). This 47 acre tract will now become part of DCR's Beaverbrook North Reservation which presently encompasses the undeveloped portion of the former Metropolitan State Hospital totaling some 150 acres in extent.

To refresh readers' memories, Lot 1 was the remaining undeveloped portion of the former Middlesex County Hospital property. In addition to magnificent mature forested uplands, the property was also found to contain seven vernal pools, which have all since been certified. The property is also a vital link in the Western Greenway, a greenbelt of over 1000 acres of interconnected, undeveloped land that wends its way through the communities of Belmont, Lexington and Waltham.

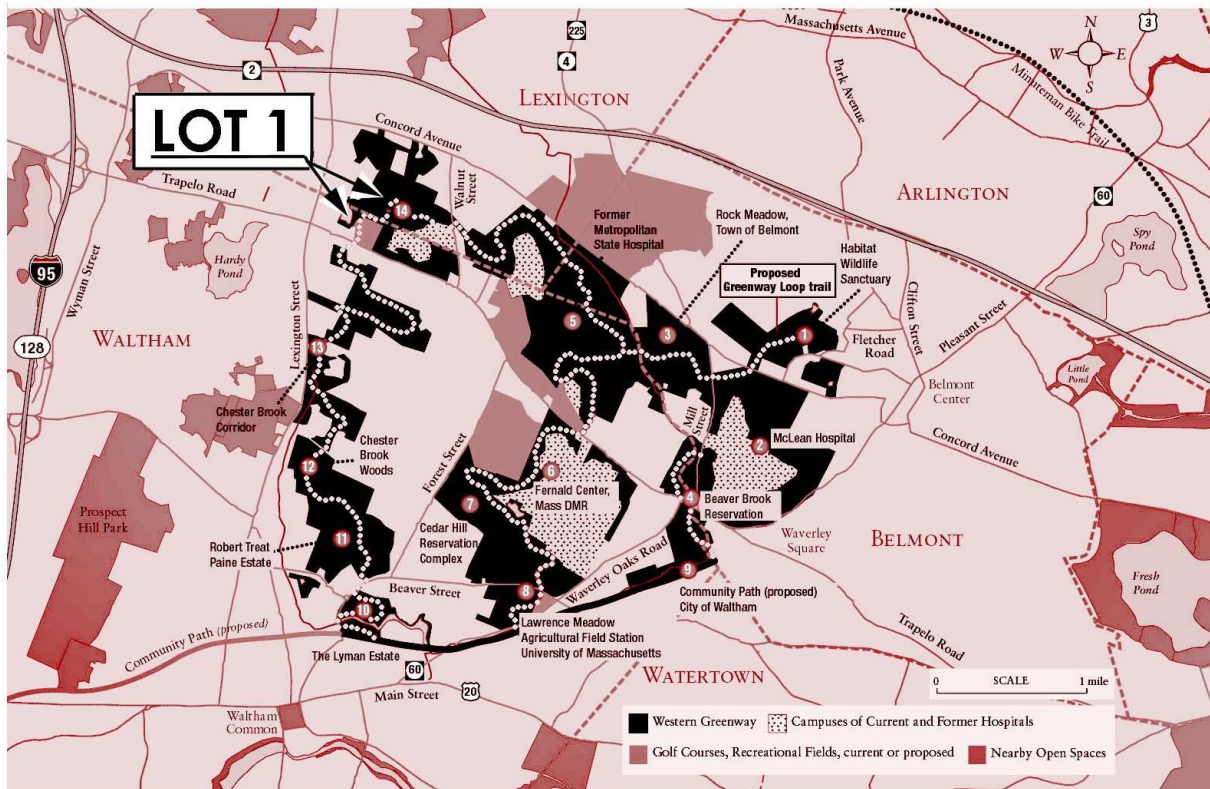


As the westernmost property in the Western Greenway, Lot 1 provides the vital connecting link for the planned Western Greenway Trail. Originating at Mass Audubon's Habitat Sanctuary in Belmont, this trail will traverse the present Beaverbrook North property, cross Walnut Street and continue across Lot 1 to where the trail will cross Trapelo Road as it heads south into Waltham. Representatives of local conservation organizations, including CLC, from the three communities that are members of the Friends of the Western Greenway are already developing plans in conjunction with representatives of DCR to complete the missing sections of this trail network. Watch for future opportunities for community involvement: to participate in both trail maintenance for the existing trails on Lot 1 as well as development of the planned new trail links. (See the Fall Walk schedule elsewhere in this issue for the first such workday.)



It isn't often in the ongoing struggle to preserve open space that the opportunity to savor a complete victory is possible. The transfer of the Lexington portion of Lot 1 in its entirety to DCR for preservation as conservation land is one such instance. A huge debt of gratitude is to be extended to our elected representatives in state government and our local elected officials who doggedly supported this effort; to the staff within DCR that supported this effort in the face of opposition from other departments within the previous administration; and above all to the involved citizenry who stepped forward time and again over the last several years to make their wishes heard as the future of this property was being deliberated. Lot 1 now truly belongs to the people of the Commonwealth at last.

## THE WESTERN GREENWAY: Lexington-Waltham-Belmont



### The Mushroom Summer

by Kate Fricker

This has been a summer of mushrooms. The combination of very wet weather followed by dry weather in the second half of August seemed to produce the perfect environment for mushrooms. They sprouted up all over the woods.

Actually the mushroom you see is only the fruiting body of the fungus, the structure that exists to spread the spores to create the next generation of mushrooms. The main part of the mushroom is underground or inside rotten wood or other organic material. Mushrooms even grow on cow pies. They exist as fragile thread-like mycelia, out of sight until the environment is just right for spreading spores, as it was in August.

The visible part of the mushroom may have gills or wrinkles or pores or “teeth” or just a smooth surface for spreading the spores. The top of the mushroom may be yellow, orange, white, tan, brown or even blue. It may be flat, convex, concave, spotted, slimy or spiky. The stem may be fat or thin, smooth or ragged. There may be a ring of fleshy tissue around the stem, and there may be a fat bulge at the base.



Mushroom identification is very difficult, even for experts. If you know 20 local ferns, you can probably identify almost all the ferns in Lexington. You would have to know thousands of mushrooms to identify our local fungi. It is possible, however, to identify a few of the common varieties, especially those that always come up in the same place at the same time of year. The best approach is to find a good field guide (or two or three), such as the National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mushrooms, by Gary Lincoff. Also recommended is Mushrooms Demystified, by David Arora. Then locate a key you can follow to narrow down the possibilities. There is a good one for amateur mycologists at [www.mushroomexpert.com/major\\_groups.html](http://www.mushroomexpert.com/major_groups.html). Finally, get out your digital camera to record what you see.

## The Lexington Tree Inventory Identifies Common Species and Locates Potential Planting Areas

by Anne Senning

A tree inventory is an element essential to the conservation of Lexington’s tree stock. The Lexington Tree Inventory 2008 summer project has taken stock of the species and condition of over 1,500 of Lexington’s public trees. It also located eighty-eight potential planting areas for new trees on five major streets leading into the town center: Massachusetts Avenue, Waltham Street, Bedford Street, Woburn Street and Worthen Road.



A goal of the Tree Inventory project was to focus on trees in the public right-of-way on accepted streets, and trees in certain parks and cemeteries.

The most populous species of tree found in the summer inventory was the Norway maple, *Acer platanoides*, an invasive species. The Commonwealth has banned its importation since July 1, 2006. Its propagation and sale will be banned January 1, 2009. The Northern red oak, *Quercus rubra* is the second most populous species of tree inventoried this summer. It is a native tree with a taproot, which prefers uplands and hills. The Red maple, *Acer rubrum* was the third most populous species of tree inventoried this summer. This is another native species, provides bright fall color and tolerates wet soils.



Another goal of the Tree Inventory project was to locate potential sites where new street trees might be planted in an environment, which would maximize each tree's chance of survival, while at the same time contributing to the beauty of Lexington and the health of its citizens. The Tree Warden and the Tree Committee will use this information to plant trees using funds approved at the spring 2008 Town Meeting.

A suitable planting area is defined by the committee as a strip of land in the town right-of-way located between the sidewalk and the curb of the street (i.e., in the grass strip) or, where there is no sidewalk, located in a lawn in the town right-of-way. It must be at least four feet (4') wide and four feet (4') long or longer. A planting area has three restrictions. It may not be located under overhead wires, block the sight lines at the intersection of any streets, or be placed where it will block existing trees in front of a property.

The summer Lexington Tree Inventory project relied on two summer interns: Blaize Denfeld and Jonathan Penney, both of Clark University. They worked in conjunction with members of the Lexington Tree Committee, Lexington Friends of Trees, and David J. Pinsonneault, Tree Warden/Superintendent of Public Grounds, Department of Public Works. Peter Karalexis and personnel in the town Engineering Department, and David Bordenca of the MIS Department provided significant technical support.

### **Lot 1, Then and Now** by Jere Frick and Kate Fricker

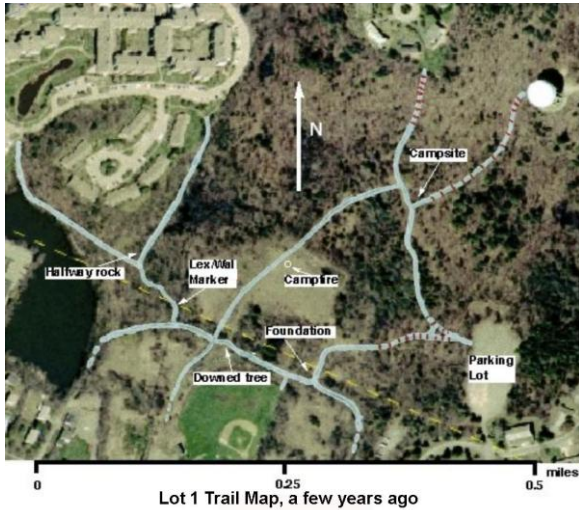
The former Middlesex County Hospital property, now known as Lot 1, has had a long history. In 1680 a cart road was ordered by the "townsmen" of Concord and Lincoln to connect their towns through Lexington (then Cambridge Farms) with Waltham, Watertown, and the Charles River, giving them access to the Boston markets. The portion of this road that ran through the present Lot 1 was called Oxbow Road. It is still there, still walkable in many sections. Some of the original stone walls lining it are intact, an occasional cobblestone can still be found, and old foundations of houses that once lined the road are still visible under the bushes.



The old cart road was no longer much used after the Concord Turnpike was built. The Ricci family farmed the land adjacent to the County land and the old cart road became known as Ricci's Lane, because it entered their property from Waltham Street.

Later, when Brookhaven was built, the Lexington Historical Commission required preservation of a section of the Lane that provides access to Lot 1. Along this "new" path there is a granite marker on the left that defines the boundary of Lexington and Waltham.

Lot 1 has been a tempting open space for developers looking for room to dump surplus construction debris. A large deposit still remains at the place where the “old cart road” intersects with a former road from Trapelo Road to the Lexington portion of Lot 1. Although this pile was ordered to be removed, it never was, making a strange-looking hill covered with new growth of bushes and trees.



For those interested in exploring, a trip through Lot 1 can be an adventure. Trails can be located fairly easily, although there are no trail markers to give directions. The paths are overgrown in some places, and there are extensive patches of poison ivy to trap the unwary. (Proper clothing is suggested.) There are seven certified vernal pools to be discovered, along with a branch of the Chester Brook.

The next challenge is to work with the State Department of Conservation and Recreation on plans for accessibility and maintenance.

Meanwhile we thank all those citizens who have been involved in the effort to protect this land, particularly Representatives Jay Kaufman and Tom Stanley. It is rather nice to have a bit of wilderness in the middle of so much civilization, and it is also important!

### ***The Wild Trees***

By Richard Preston

Reviewed by Keith Ohmart

For those of you who have walked among the redwoods in California, have you ever wondered what the world of the forest canopy was like so far off the ground? If so, then *The Wild Trees* is the book for you. In its pages Richard Preston describes the exploits of Steve Sillett and a handful of daring botanists and amateur naturalists who have discovered a world that is an entire ecosystem unto itself that up until twenty or so years ago hardly anyone even knew existed.

Coast redwoods are the largest organisms that the world has ever sustained with trunks up to thirty feet wide attaining heights of over thirty-five stories. Sillett and his colleagues entered this world to find lush hanging gardens and the equivalent of entire forest glades growing hundreds of feet off the ground. Exploring this world with the knowledge that one wrong step could mean a deadly plunge gives a whole new dimension to the term, ‘doing cutting-edge science’.

The tale of how this handful of dedicated friends and associates first taught themselves the climbing techniques necessary to safely explore this world without harming its unique life forms, and then proceeded to enter it and in the process create an entirely new field of ecological research, is a story that will enthrall and inspire.

