



**Citizens for  
Lexington  
Conservation**

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<http://www.clclex.org>

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**September, 2010**  
Kate Fricker, Editor  
Eileen Entin & Keith Ohmart, Co-Presidents

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**New England Aster**

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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 2010," you are up to date. If it says "Dues paid 2009" (or earlier), then it is time to renew your membership for 2010. 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 been scanned and are available at no charge on our web site, <http://www.clclex.org>.

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.

## Thank you Walk Leaders

CLC is grateful for the people who volunteer to lead our spring and fall walks. Leaders of the 2010 Spring Walks were Keith Ohmart, Nell Walker, Sam Doran, Emily Schadler and Ned Eisner.

## Photo Credits

Photos of native fall flowers and berries are by Jane Warren.

## Answer to Photo Quiz

Look in the North Street Sand Pit ponds.



**Red Baneberry**

## **Citizens for Lexington Conservation    Fall Walks 2010**

All walks are in Lexington and free and open to the public

### **Birds on the Move      Saturday, September 11    8:00 to 10:00 am**

This walk will focus on fall migrants, as this is the height of the season for the northern breeders coming through on their way south. The walk will be cancelled if it's raining. We will walk in Dunback Meadows, meeting at the Allen St. entrance, which is off Waltham St. Co-sponsored by the Brookline Bird Club and the Menotomy Bird Club. Leader: Bobbie Hodson [hodsonkorn@rcn.com](mailto:hodsonkorn@rcn.com) Phone: (781)861-9421

### **Beaver Brook North Exploration      Saturday, October 9    1:30 pm**

Explore the latest addition to the trail network on DCR's Beaver Brook North Reservation including the new 500' boardwalk constructed last summer by Lexington's conservation steward volunteers which traverses the extensive cattail marshes west of Avalon at Lexington Hills. Wear sturdy hiking shoes and bring your own water. Expect 2-3 hours of steady walking. Meet behind the abandoned Metropolitan Hospital administration building off of the Metropolitan Parkway South (enter opposite approximately 480 Trapelo Road, Waltham). Leader: Keith Ohmart: 781-862-6216.

### **Walk in Katahdin Woods      Saturday, October 16    10:00 am to noon**

Rain date October 17 at the same time.

The walk is a 2.7 mile loop through the Katahdin Woods and Tophet Swamp conservation areas. The trail goes through diverse habitats: open marsh, marsh and streams with forest cover, open field and forest edge that are steep and rough. There is a shallow stream to cross by walking on stones so wear appropriate shoes. Clothing should provide protection from mosquitoes, ticks, and brush. We will see hawks and many other birds as well as deer, raccoons, and beavers (and their dams and lodges) along with peak fall colors. We will return to the parking area around 12:00 noon. You are welcome to bring a picnic lunch to enjoy in the quiet, shady parking area. A picnic table is available. The Town of Lexington Conservation Division provides on-line maps of all conservation areas, at <http://ci.lexington.ma.us/conservation/conland.cfm>. Meeting location: back end of parking lot at 110 Hartwell Ave. near gate across trail. Leader: Paul Knight [paul.the.knight@gmail.com](mailto:paul.the.knight@gmail.com).

### **Migrating Birds      Saturday October 16    8:00 to 10:00 am**

We will focus on the late migrants in Dunback Meadows, meeting at the Allen St. entrance, which is off Waltham St. The walk will be cancelled if it's raining. Co-sponsored by the Brookline Bird Club and the Menotomy Bird Club. Leader: Bobbie Hodson [hodsonkorn@rcn.com](mailto:hodsonkorn@rcn.com) Phone: (781)861-9421

### **Paint Mine Conservation Area      Saturday October 23    1:30 to 3:00 pm.**

Talking trees: Which tree was used to make Native American baby formula? Which helped colonists to tan hides and make ink? Which trees are rare in Lexington and why are some found at the Paint Mine? Come and find out!! Meet in the Estabrook School parking lot off Grove St. Leader: Fran Ludwig (781)861-7231

## **Book Review: Return to Wild America, by Scott Weidensaul**

Reviewed by Keith Ohmart

Fifty years after birding icon Roger Tory Peterson and noted British naturalist James Fisher undertook a thirty thousand mile trek around North America that they then memorialized in their classic entitled Wild America, noted contemporary naturalist Scott Weidensaul has followed in their footsteps to report on the changes that have taken place in the last half century. The answers may surprise you in more ways than one, and that is the adventure in reading this accounting of Weidensaul's own journey.

Braced for a litany of environmental woe as he traced the footsteps of his predecessors, Weidensaul did indeed encounter examples of tragic environmental loss in his travels but also came away with discoveries of surprising hope and renewal that he hadn't been expecting. Beginning his journey on the wild coast of Newfoundland, his itinerary took him down the length of the eastern seaboard to the Florida Keys, then west through Texas, the Southwest and a side trip into northern Mexico before heading north along the Pacific coast and ending his journey on the outermost island of the Aleutian chain.

Though birds were the original focus of Peterson's journey as was true for Weidensaul, both travelers took ample time to observe and record the tremendous range of habitats and wildlife that comprise the vast mosaic found in North America. Reading Weidensaul's account of his adventure has left this reader with a renewed appreciation not only for what was witnessed by Peterson and Fisher fifty years ago, but also for the environmental riches and their potential in our own age. 🌲

## **Lincoln Park Celebrates 25 Years**

By Nell Walker



**Partridgeberry**

On Sunday, September 26 at 3 pm the Lincoln Park Committee will hold an Open House to celebrate the recently created Richard and Jeanne Kirk Woodland Gardens and 25 years of development at Lincoln Park. Enter at the bike path entrance on Worthen Road, opposite the high school.

Old-time residents will marvel at the transformation from a dump where we took our trash to an enormous park, with playing fields, trails, gardens, native wildflower meadows, a bike path and new plantings along Worthen Road. West of the playing fields is an

80 foot deck looking over an undeveloped swamp . A nature trail winds between Lincoln Street Ball Fields and Worthen Road. There are two handicap-accessible boardwalks with periodic benches for rest and observation. Fifteen exercise stations, with diagram instructions, are spaced around the park.

In the last two years landscape architect Wesley Wirth has reclaimed an area that was littered with mounds of dump and construction debris, making a native plant garden in the woods. In addition, an invasive plant management program was carried out under the New England Wildlife Society.

You can download a map of Lincoln Park if you are getting the electronic version of this newsletter, (or if you have nimble fingers), at <http://ci.lexington.ma.us/recreation/Theresa%20and%20Roberta%20lee%20Fitness%20path.pdf>. Another way to obtain the map with less clicking is to go to [www.clclex.org](http://www.clclex.org) and click on the live link in the electronic version of this September 2010 newsletter. While you are there look at how beautiful Jane Warren's flower and berry photographs are in color.



## **The Pond at Brookhaven**

by Allen C. West

A pond can be many things: a view of open water, crystal clear, with manicured lawns and gardens surrounding it; a wildlife sanctuary, teeming with birds, frogs, fish and insect life; a wild place, with rampant, impenetrable vegetation in and around it.

It can also be a retention pond that collects water flowing from intermittent rain, moderating the outflow, so the drainage areas below it will not flood. The Brookhaven pond was constructed as a retention pond, designed to prevent flooding in the Chester Brook, which runs along Lexington Street into Waltham. Because of this flooding danger, the Lexington Conservation Commission requires that it remain pretty much untouched.

From my windows I look down on the small (80x25 yards) pond lying between two wings of Brookhaven. Although the pond looks stagnant, it is populated by goldfish, the descendants of those released by a resident years ago, which provide food for cormorants, kingfishers, hooded mergansers, great blue herons, herring gulls, and an 18" snapping turtle. Crayfish lurk under the bank, and there is even evidence that a muskrat is making his home there. Red-winged blackbirds nest in the cattails, and song sparrows winter among the dead weeds. Several large elderberry bushes attract bird life, and at this time of year goldfinches nosh on thistle seeds.



**Swamp Milkweed**

As the pond matures, it is losing water surface to the cattails and other marsh plants. The water is often green and cloudy. Invasive species, particularly oriental bittersweet and phragmites, are becoming a serious problem. Canada geese are a nuisance despite persistent efforts by residents. Nevertheless, our pond remains a delightful small wilderness in the center of a densely populated part of Lexington.



## CLC's Position on Busa Farm Land Use

The Board of Citizens for Lexington Conservation is in favor of keeping the Busa Farm property as a working community farm. Kate Fricker will present our view at the meeting of the Busa Land Use Proposal Committee at Cary Hall Auditorium on September 15<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m.

We have already lost most of the working farms in Massachusetts, as they have found it impossible to compete with out-of-state food sources, thanks to cheap labor abroad and highly subsidized production and transportation costs. With the eventual crunch in our oil supply and the resulting rise in transportation costs, it will become increasingly important to have local supplies of food.



Where in Lexington can you find this fern called Water Shamrock?

Food that is locally grown and organic has several health and nutrition benefits, being richer in vitamins and antioxidants than the food we normally find in our supermarkets. And it is more easily supervised for pesticide use.

Another point in favor of a local farm is its educational value. There would be the possibility of work-sharing, interns, classroom visits and programs for adults, as well as teaching opportunities for home gardeners.

A local farm would provide secure, locally based jobs. It would not be a tax burden on the town, as it would be self-supporting. And by realizing the health benefits of fresh, nutritious food, there could be significant health care savings.

Also, Busa Farm is an important wildlife resource, being used during migration by the many species of birds attracted to its fields. It is a key part of the Arlington Reservoir open space.

We are not opposed to sports, but Lexington has many athletic fields and only two remaining farms. We are also not opposed to low cost housing, but if we pave over this prime farm land it will never again be available for farming. Let's make this a decision that is in the best long-term interests of our community. 🌲

## Update on Burlington's Landlocked Forest

By Wendy Gabrenya

Burlington's Landlocked Forest, an undeveloped parcel of 250 acres on the border between Lexington and Route 3, is owned by Burlington, but is accessed through Lexington.

On Saturday, September 25<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 am there will be a dedication ceremony for a new kiosk, located at the intersection of Turning Mill Road and Mountain Road that marks the Lexington entrance to the forest and the entrance to Lexington's Paint Mine conservation area. This kiosk, designed by Mike Tabaczynski and Mark Gabrenya, will now be the standard for kiosks to be built in Lexington. It contains a map box that will contain maps that visitors can take with them as they walk the trails. A detailed map is also available at [www.landlockedforest.com/trailmap6-13-2010.pdf](http://www.landlockedforest.com/trailmap6-13-2010.pdf). For those interested, plans and specifications for the kiosk are on file with the Lexington Conservation Commission.

There will be a guided trail walk following the ceremony. The Friends of the Landlocked Forest have built a number of trails in the Forest and next year they plan to apply to the Conservation Commission for a permit to build boardwalks across the wetlands in the center of it. 🌲

## **Let's Take a Walk: Joyce Miller's Meadow**

By Kate Fricker

This woodland and overgrown meadow is an ideal short walk with views over Arlington's Great Meadow. It is easily accessed by foot from the Minuteman Bikeway, a short distance toward Arlington from the Maple Street intersection. To get to the trailhead by car from Lexington Center, drive toward Arlington on Mass. Avenue, past the Maple Street turnoff, and turn left on Joseph Road. Continue to the end and turn left on Spencer Street. If you park the car here you can find a path to the bikeway and Joyce Miller's Meadow on the right at the end of the street.

As you cross the bikeway you will notice that the entry to the meadow is flanked by vigorous, invasive Japanese knotweed plants. These are in bloom in early September, covered with honeybees and other insects. There are old stone walls on either side of the path, formerly known as Harrington Road. It led to the farm of Robert Harrington, a relative of the Jonathan Harrington who died at the opening of the American Revolution. Many sugar maple trees flank the road here, some of them with fat, hairy poison ivy vines climbing them. Within a short distance a fork in the trail leads to the right to the former meadow. If you take this fork and keep to the left



**Wintergreen**

wherever it branches you will come back to "Harrington Road". The ground in this area is covered with hair cap moss, a good ground cover on sandy soil. The spore-bearing part of this moss has a capsule at the top, where the spores develop, covered by a

“wig”. By fall the moss is often dead-looking and dark brown, but some of those that are shaded by trees continue to maintain their lush green color. The open space is gradually becoming filled in with shrubs and small trees. Among them are some invasive buck-thorn bushes. Someone has put mesh bags around some of the dark blue berries for a study.

When you return to “Harrington Road”, look on the left for some spotted wintergreen plants. Their dark and light green variegated leaves are as beautiful as any foliage plants sold by the commercial gardens. As you continue on the road, look for a dying black oak tree on the left at the next intersection. The pile of sawdust at its base shows the presence of carpenter ants. Perhaps a chipmunk lives in the hole. A short distance beyond is the end of the Joyce Miller Meadow property and the beginning of Arlington’s Great Meadow. Continue on for some beautiful vistas.

Almost immediately you will come to a boardwalk over a seasonally swampy area. As it says on the first board, the boardwalk was built in 2005 by FOAGM, the Friends of Arlington’s Great Meadow. The view over the meadow is dominated by another invasive plant, the beautiful, invasive purple loosestrife, but there are also touch-me-nots, with their explosive seed pods, and joe-pye-weed. Notice the vibernums and dogwoods, with their leaves exactly opposite each other on the twigs.

At the end of the boardwalk take the right trail branch to go to the top of the hill, then keep left to circle back to the boardwalk. The top of the hill provides a chance to stop and admire the view over the Great Meadow. There is also a very pretty clump of gray birch trees, probably the suckers that grew after an original tree was cut down. A big black oak dominates the other side of the hilltop. The black oaks have acorn caps that grow halfway down the side of the acorn, instead of just sitting on top as do other oaks.

When you get back to the boardwalk you can return to “Harrington Road” and make your way back to the trailhead.

There is a map of this property and Arlington’s Great Meadow at [http://www.lexingtonma.gov/conservation/Draft%20conservation%20area%20maps/JM\\_M\\_AGM.pdf](http://www.lexingtonma.gov/conservation/Draft%20conservation%20area%20maps/JM_M_AGM.pdf).



## **Conservation in Woburn**

By Steven Keleti, President, Friends of Mary Cummings Park

Great progress has been made toward conservation in Woburn, which also befits Lexington residents.

On May 11, 2010, the Woburn City Council appropriated \$7million to pay the costs of acquiring the 74.5-acre Whispering Hill Woods and appropriated \$2.7 million to pay the costs of acquiring the centrally-located 7.6-acre Spence Farm property. The purchase of these two parcels increases Woburn’s open space by 10 percent and marks the first time in more than 30 years that that city has acquired open space.

In order to fund these appropriations, the Woburn City Council voted to accept the 0.75% meals tax (under M.G.L. c.64L s.2a). Unlike other communities which have accepted the meals tax to address revenue needs, Woburn accepted the meals tax specifically to address the need to conserve open space in Woburn.



**White Baneberry**

The City of Woburn closed on the purchase of the Spence Farm property on August 16<sup>th</sup>. An Agricultural Advisory Committee has been formed to explore the best agricultural uses for the land. If you are interested in participating, please contact Rob Truslow at [rtruslow@comcast.net](mailto:rtruslow@comcast.net).

When the purchase of Whispering Hill Woods is completed, the combined public open space of Mary Cummings Park and Whispering Hill Woods will be over 285 acres, creating the 10th-

largest public park area inside Route 128, and less than a mile from Lexington. Additional conservation areas near the park augment the conservation and recreational value of this area, as seen in the map that can be viewed at the following web site: <http://www.cummingspark.org/sites/default/files/MaryCummingsPark.pdf>.

On the west side of the park in Burlington, the 14-acre Muller Glen is threatened with development. At the upcoming September 27<sup>th</sup> Burlington Town meeting, a rezoning request by Symes Development will be considered. If the rezoning request is denied and the developer ceases interest in purchasing the land, the Town of Burlington may have the opportunity to pursue purchase of this important conservation parcel, which is on the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan as being of conservation interest. It provides linkage between the wetlands in Mary Cummings Park and the wetlands in the Seven Springs conservation area.

Mary Cummings Park was created in 1930 to be forever open as a public pleasure ground. At 210 acres, spanning the Burlington and Woburn line, it is the 12th-largest public park inside Route 128. Held in trust by the City of Boston, it was transferred from the Boston Parks Department to the Boston Treasury Department in the late 1980s.

Mary Cummings Park has three meadows: Flyers Field and Babylon Hill Field, both in Burlington, and Central Field, in Woburn. Development over the last 40 years has been so vigorous in Burlington that Flyers Field and Babylon Hill Field are the only remaining significant meadows within Burlington. Central Field is within a Priority Habitat designated by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP).

The Town of Burlington has been seeking an agreement with Boston to build a multi-purpose recreational sports field at Babylon Hill Field. The current proposal effectively eliminates the meadow at Babylon Hill Field and the habitat for the numerous butterfly

and bird species that one can observe there. It is not yet clear whether a full environmental review will be performed, or whether the plan can be implemented in a manner which will retain the diversity of species yhat currently reside at Babylon Hill Field.

Mary Cummings Park is not well known because it was left unmarked by the City of Boston, at one point having “No Trespassing” signs. It is now marked with small “Mary Cummings Estate” signs. Although the signs are ambiguous, it is a public park. Parking is available along Blanchard Road (which is Wheeler Road at the Middlesex Turnpike).

See [www.cummingspark.org](http://www.cummingspark.org) for more information on Mary Cummings Park and for directions. If you would like to help, or would like to have a tour of the park, please email [info@cummingspark.org](mailto:info@cummingspark.org).



## Zero Energy Homes

by Jennifer Daly

Imagine a home that produces as much energy as it consumes. That is what is meant by “net-zero,” or “zero energy.” Now, imagine what this home might look like. Do you see an ultra-modern home built almost entirely out of solar panels? Do you see an “earth ship,” made from recycled tires and bottles built into the side of a hill in the desert somewhere? Can you imagine a home that has virtually no electric, heating, and cooling bills? Do you assume it would have to be an expensive, high-end home?



**This zero energy “affordable” deed-restricted home sold for \$195,200.**

The formula for achieving a zero-energy home is fairly simple: Build a house with an extremely tight super-insulated envelope, use high efficiency air source heat pumps, use a simple ventilating system to bring in and move fresh air around, and install a renewable energy system to provide power. The challenge is making this formula cost effective for the builder and affordable for the home buyer.

With plans that call for 12 inch thick walls filled with insulation, Transformations, Inc. of Townsend, MA ([www.transformations-inc.com](http://www.transformations-inc.com)) has built a home that could be heated with the equivalent of two hair dryers and an 80-Watt light bulb. “In fact, when the energy auditors came to test just how tight the building envelope was, they couldn’t!” said Transformations president R. Carter Scott, “Not without ordering a new smaller ring in order to complete the air flow test.” By achieving an envelope this tight, the builder is able to use high efficiency air-source heat pumps for both heating and cooling. The lower cost for these units helps to offset the increased cost of super-insulating the homes. Power for the heat pumps comes from electricity from the grid and renewable energy. The end result is a home that will require a fraction of the energy used by a home built to conventional standards.



**This zero energy home sold for \$359,900.**