

CLC's Annual Meeting

Citizens for Lexington Conservation usually holds its annual meeting in April, but with restrictions imposed by Covid-19, we have postponed our annual meeting until later this year when it may be possible to hold an in-person rather than virtual meeting. Please check our website (CLCLex.org) periodically for further information about the annual meeting, and look for an announcement by the beginning of fall.



2021 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 email announcing this issue. If it says Dues Paid Through April 2021 (or earlier), it is time to renew your membership for 2021.

Annual membership to CLC is \$20.00. Suggested membership levels are:

_____ \$ 20 (Twig)

_____ \$ 50 (Branch)

_____ \$100 (Tree)

_____ \$(Other)

You may pay your dues using PayPal on the CLC Website (<https://www.clclex.org>).

If you prefer to contribute by mail, please send your name and the other information requested on the form below, along with your check, to:

Citizens for Lexington Conservation
P.O. Box 292
Lexington, MA 02420-0003

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone number: _____

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.

CITIZENS FOR LEXINGTON CONSERVATION 2021 SPRING WALKS

*All walks are free and open to the public.
See each event description for specific Covid-19 requirements.*

Birding Walks:

Saturday, May 8, 8-10 am: Birding Willards Woods

Willards Woods mix of open fields and wood lots annually attracts a wide variety of resident and migratory bird species. Catch the peak of spring migration for an opportunity to see which species are passing through on their way to their summer breeding grounds further north. More than light rain will cancel the event. No dogs please. **Group limit – 10. Masks and pre-registration required.** Send an email to walk leader John Andrews to register and receive confirmation of the meeting point location. Title your message: *Registration – Willards Woods Walk.*

Walk Leader: John Andrews (jandrews166@gmail.com)

Saturday, May 15, 7:30-9:30 am: Birding Lower Vine Brook

Warblers are small, beautiful tropical birds that fly north to breed every year. Over 15 different species stop off in this sheltered area during their spring migration to their nesting grounds in northern New England and Canada. Depending on the weather and the foliage, you may see a dozen species in a morning. No dogs please. More than light rain will cancel the event. **Group limit – 10. Masks and pre-registration required.** Send an email to walk leader Harry West to register and receive confirmation of the meeting point location. Title your message: *Registration – LVB Walk.*

Walk Leader: Harry West (hwest2020@gmail.com)

Nature Walks and Other Activities:

Saturday, May 8, 10 am – 12 noon: Garlic Mustard Pull at Lincoln Park

Garlic mustard seeds can take up to seven years to sprout, which requires repeated efforts to control and eradicate this aggressive invasive species. Come join CLC's multi-year effort to pull this year's progeny from along the pathways in Lincoln Park. Bring gardening gloves. Steady rain cancels. Meet at the Fitness Path Trail entrance on Middleby Road across from the entrance to Bridge School where you may park. **Masks required.** Social distancing will be maintained due to the nature of the activity. All welcome, no pre-registration required.

Leader: Keith Ohmart (kohmart@verizon.net)

Saturday, May 22, 10 am – 12 noon: Using iNaturalist: A Walk at Whipple Hill

Do you have an interest in using online apps to identify plants, animals and wildlife in general? In this exploratory walk at Whipple Hill we will use iNaturalist to see what can be learned using this handy smart phone resource. Plants will be the focus (since they are easiest to photograph) but we'll look at other organisms as available.

Prerequisite: Bring your phone with iNaturalist installed and ready to use. Please try it out: take a few sample photos and have your phone enabled for cellular data. The usefulness of iNaturalist depends on taking good photos. The app can be found at: <https://www.inaturalist.org>. It's free, but may require registration on the iNaturalist web site. **Group limit – 10. Masks and pre-registration required.** Send an e-mail to walk leader Andrea Golden to register and receive confirmation of the meeting point location. Title your message: *Registration – Whipple Hill Walk*. Heavy rain cancels.

Walk Leader: Andrea Golden (andgold@comcast.net)

Sunday, June 13, 10 am – 12 noon: iNaturalist Walk in Dunback Meadow

This exploratory walk at Dunback Meadow will provide a second opportunity to use iNaturalist to see what can be learned using this handy smart phone resource. Plants will be the focus (since they are easiest to photograph) but we'll look at other organisms as available.

Prerequisite: Bring your phone with iNaturalist installed and ready to use. Please try it out: take a few sample photos and have your phone enabled for cellular data. The usefulness of iNaturalist depends on taking good photos. The app may be found at: <https://www.inaturalist.org>. It's free, but may require registration on the iNaturalist web site. **Group limit – 10. Masks and pre-registration required.** Send an e-mail to walk leader Barbara Katzenberg to register and receive confirmation of the meeting point location. Title your message: *Registration – Dunback Walk*. Heavy rain cancels.

Walk Leader: Barbara Katzenberg (barbara.katzenberg@gmail.com)

Thank You

During 2020 CLC was unable to have organized events due to the pandemic. Many people stepped up to provide guidance for self-directed walks and other outdoor activities. This information was provided on the CLC website and in our 2020 newsletters. For self-directed walks, information was provided on ACROSS Lexington routes and “Take Your Own Trail Walks” in Bedford. For birding, information was provided about the best birding apps and best birding locations in Lexington conservation areas. Information was provided on the “essential activity” of farming, and edible native species. Other topics included photography and hiking, and using iNaturalist to identify plants and animals. We wish to express our gratitude to: Keith Ohmart, Alex Dohan, Clem Larson, Marj Rines, Mary Rose Scozzafava, Russ Cohen, Neelakantan Sunder, and Andrea Golden.

CLC’s New and Improved Website!!!

By Rita Pandey

We are working on redesigning our website. The working committee, consisting of Keith Ohmart, Bobbie Hodson and Rita Pandey, is overseeing this project.

We interviewed several web designers and selected Jon Sachs, who will format and re-design the website as well as train responsible members on how to update the website. Jon is devoted to conservation issues and is a talented web designer. He played an important role in saving Mary Cummings Park in Burlington. All his projects can be viewed here: <https://www.jonsachscollected.com>.

The new website will be user friendly and easily searchable. The new website will contain most of the existing material but will have some new features and interactive elements as well. We will add maps, featured plants, and featured properties along with a separate section for members. Members will have more opportunity to contribute content to the web site regarding various topics. Additionally, a section for special-interest nature lovers will provide information regarding night sky watching, bird watching, geology, and trails. We are hoping to have the new site up and operating by late spring/early summer.

Watch for further updates and contact us if you are interested in contributing content or assisting with the maintenance of the web site.

New Signage in our Lexington Conservation Lands

By Bobbie Hodson

Ever wonder about the geology, botany, and history of our conservation lands while you’re walking through them? Citizens for Lexington Conservation is addressing this need by starting a multi-year program to add well researched and informative signage. Did you know that thousands of years ago, the edge of a glacial lake was on one of our conservation lands? As you walk through Dunback Meadow you are on land that once was a thriving farmland that sent its veggies into the Boston area.

The CLC board recently decided to make at least one or two large signs yearly, dependent upon funds, and has hired Jon Sachs, an experienced designer, to help us create them. We are asking all of you to send us ideas and interesting information about our beautiful lands in Lexington. History, Botany, Zoology, Geology—Please consider it all. We will use your information to start a priority list for signs we will make. (Please send to robertahodson@comcast.net.)

The subcommittee working on developing the signage consists of Eileen Entin, Keith Ohmart, and Bobbie Hodson. We're planning these signs to be similar to those you can view in locations such as Minuteman National Park and Audubon sites. Each one will show photos and/or drawings relevant to biological, geological or historical information for the site that we hope walkers/bikers will enjoy.

The Conservation Office for the Town of Lexington New Staff Onboard!

By Amber Carr

Introducing Amber



Amber Carr joined Lexington's Conservation Office in November 2020 as the Conservation Coordinator. She is a trained ecologist specializing in land management for targeted wildlife species and the restoration of degraded habitats. She has over 14 years of experience working for federal, state, municipal, and non-profit agencies throughout New England. Her background in wildlife biology encompasses observation and management for a wide variety of coastal and inland species including birds, herps, and mammals. She also has a strong background in establishing and maintaining cross organizational partnerships to work on collaborative goals across jurisdictional boundaries. She has led

many outdoor programs for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mass Audubon, the Appalachian Mountain Club, and other community conservation organizations. She enjoys spending as much time as possible outside and can be found birding, hiking, paddling, rock climbing, and practicing yoga. She enjoys exploring with new and seasoned adventurers alike and looks forward to meeting you soon.

Meet Meghan



Meghan McNamara started her position as Department Assistant for the Conservation Office in September 2020. Working remotely from the start, she has been busy learning about wetlands protection and the dedicated work of our Land Stewards. Meghan holds a Bachelor's degree in both Environmental Science and Urban Planning from Westfield State University, where she was captain of the Women's Track and Field team. Meghan

spent a number of summers as an intern for the EPA, coordinating the Youth and the Environment Program, which provides inner-city youth with experience in the environmental field. When she's not busy assisting consultants and homeowners, Meghan can be found snowboarding in the winter months, bike riding and swimming in the summer, and perfecting her baking recipes on the rainy days in between. She is proud to be working in Lexington, where two generations of her family grew up, and looks forward to meeting the community safely in person soon!

Spring Clean Up: Less is More

By Pamela Lyons and Sara Bothwell Allen

Mother Nature doesn't do much in terms of spring clean-up and you don't have to either. The key fact about spring clean-up is: butterflies, bees, ladybug beetles, fireflies and other beneficial insects overwinter (in one form or other) in leaf litter and plant stems, or rest in the top inches of soil. The more you remove, the fewer insects remain. It's best to just leave the leaves where they are. You will find they provide free mulch and eventually disappear. You will have more earthworms (indicators and manufacturers of good soil) wherever you have leaf debris.

If you must remove leaves, use them as natural mulch for shrubs and perennials. Use a rake. Leaf blowers, whether gas or electric, destroy the insect habitat we are trying to protect. Create a brush pile of leaves and fallen branches somewhere unobtrusive. What about stems on perennial plants? Stems provide shelter for some bees and other beneficial insects that have spent the winter inside them. Best is to leave them until the temperatures are consistently in the 50's, when the insects will have emerged. If you must remove these stems before then, add them to your brush pile too, so the insects can emerge in April and May. They will bring in hungry bird visitors for you to enjoy. Over the years, we have noticed that brush piles in full sun attract more birds than brush piles under trees. Loosely stacked brush piles also provide shelter for ground-dwelling birds.

Mulching around shrubs and trees. Newly planted trees can benefit from a ring of mulch for retaining moisture and preventing competition with grass. Make sure mulch is at least six to twelve inches away from the trunk because mulch encourages bark rot. Two inches deep is plenty. Deeper than that can prevent oxygen from getting to the roots which might compensate by growing up into the mulch. Raked leaves are just as effective as wood chips. For perennial beds, put mulch down as late as possible so that the ground has a chance to warm up. Late May is a good time around here. If you saved your leaves from fall, you might manage with little or no additional mulch.

Mowing and watering your grass. Watering frequently might seem like the best way to keep a luscious lawn of grass, but your grass will actually put down deeper roots and be more resilient to drought if you water it less frequently—such as twice a week for 30-40 minutes. Watering more often encourages fungus, mildew, and shallow root growth. Watering your lawn early (5-9AM) ensures the water is absorbed into the soil but doesn't linger on the grass blades. Taller grass blades encourage root growth and make the grass plants more drought-resistant, so consider raising your mower's blade to 3-4 inches.

Herbicides and pesticides kill plants, earthworms, and insects. Consider allowing dandelions back into your lawn. A generation ago, dandelions and clover were common parts of lawns. After World War Two, chemical manufacturers created a new market for their products in suburban lawns through advertising campaigns targeted on eliminating our dandelions. Kids love dandelions and bees rely on them as some of the earliest spring flowers. Let them back in! The rest of the food web will follow.

(Note: A version of this article appeared on the Lexington Living Landscapes website: lexingtonlivinglandscapes.org.)

Photo Credits

Page 2: Goldfinch, provided by Bobbie Hodson

Page 7, Amber; and page 8, Meghan: provided by Amber Carr

Page 12: Bedford trails, provided by Clem Larson

Pages 13 and 14: Cataldo Reservation, provided by Holly Samuels

Wright Farm Spring Celebration 2021

Saturday, May 1, 12 Noon to 4 PM

The focus for this year's Wright Farm Spring Celebration is the City Nature Challenge. For details, follow this link to the Town's website:

<https://www.lexingtonma.gov/conservation/land-stewardship/pages/wright-farm-spring-event>

This event is free, and all are welcome. Per Massachusetts regulations, masks and appropriate social distancing are required.

Take-Your-Own Trail Walks, by the Bedford Trails Committee

We were inspired by Sarah Stanton's, Bedford Town Manager's, recommendation to exercise by walking our trails while wearing masks and social distancing. The Bedford Trails Committee started a "Take-Your-Own Trail Walks" series--we provide the description, map & directions, and you can take the trail walk at your convenience and your own pace. Recent ["Take Your Own" Trail Walks](#) (over 40 walks include):

- Old Rez to Wright Farm
- Bedford Depot Park to Lexington on the Minuteman Bikeway
- Historic Bedford Town Center
- Springs Brook Conservation Area
- Wilson Mill to Landlocked Forest
- Elm Brook
- Hartwell Town Forest



To Join the Group and be notified of "Take Your Own Trail Walks"--Please send an email to BedfordMA.trailwalks@gmail.com and you'll be added to the Group.

Or Join us on Facebook by clicking here:



We have also resumed our "**Hike With Your Tyke**" program as a Bedford Recreation activity, for children ages 6 and under and their Caregivers. Tykes can hike the beautiful trails in Bedford and experience trailside learning and interactive exploration. The 5-week program includes themes such as a lake, dam, birds and animals, and an approximately 1-mile trail hike in the woods, led by a knowledgeable guide, historian or naturalist.



Cataldo Reservation Update

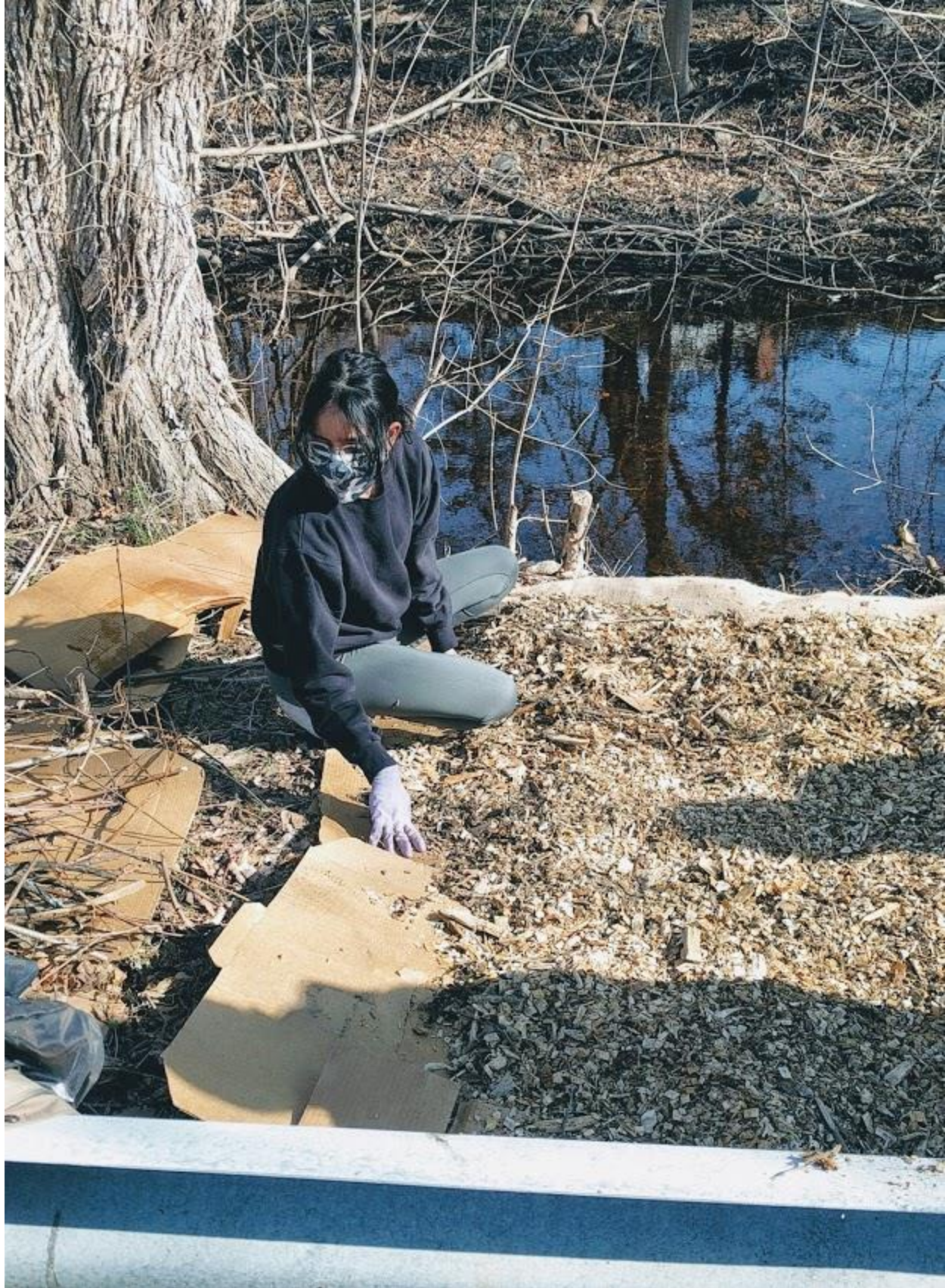
By Holly Samuels

The pandemic slowed down group work at Cataldo Reservation in East Lexington but it definitely increased visits. All during the past year, lots of people have been out on the trail regularly since the pandemic began. Many people come to the adjacent Arlington Reservoir for bird-watching and make it down to Cataldo Reservation where there are a lot of breeding ducks and herons, along with turtles and muskrats.

Last year we initiated a new idea for caring for the reservation; individuals or household groups taking care of a particular 'sector', in this case an area about 75' long. The sector volunteers were trained to identify invasive plants and how to remove them in areas that had been fairly well cleared of major invasive plants, leaving Garlic Mustard and Black Swallow wort as the main returning pests. This maintenance practice helped people feel identified with a particular small area, get to know the changes over the course of the year, and freed other regulars to work on areas that needed attention. It also gave people a way to get out and work without worrying about getting too close to others. Thanks to Diane and Mark Bleier and to Dan McGrath for being our pioneer sector stewards and doing such a thorough job taking care of their sectors last year.

Late fall we also had a couple of work days with LHS students clearing brush to a dumpster provided by the DPW. Thanks to the Envirothon Team and the newly formed Conservation Club for a great day in late November. The groups collectively removed a huge amount of accumulated brush. The area along the trail in this reservation is relatively narrow, so clearing out the extra brush makes it a much more pleasant walk and makes it easier to take care of the invasive plants that keep popping up.

Saturday, April 3rd we had another workday with the Envirothon team, this time working on the south bank of Mill Brook. Last fall, the students had helped clear an enormous amount of trash from the Bow St. parking lot side of the brook. During the winter, the invasive bushes and vines were cut and lots of cardboard was collected to lay down and suppress the new growth of Garlic Mustard and other invasive seed as well as the poison ivy growing there, which makes it difficult to get in and work during the growing months. (Unfortunately, some of the cardboard got away during a windy rain storm and will have to be fished out of the brook a little later in the season, or sooner if I can get some waders to get in there!) For this event, the DPW brought us a dumpster with wood chips, and the Envirothon Team was able to make an erosion roll with some new burlap, lay the cardboard, and cover it with woodchips, making a neat, effective cover. The team completely covered about 60 linear feet, laid cardboard on another 70 linear feet, leaving about 75 more linear feet still to be covered. The students had a lot of fun and are eager to come back and finish the job. Hopefully the restoration work will discourage littering (it already seems to be having a positive effect) and come fall, we will be able to start some restoration planting of native plants on that bank. I think you will agree it is a big improvement!



And, last but not least, we have a new sign at the Bow Street entrance, thanks to Eagle Scout Rishi Juneja, whose Eagle project included new signs for both Cataldo and for Daisy Wilson Meadow. Nice job, Rishi! The new sign is beautiful and really visible now in its new location!

