



Boxborough Conservation Trust Board of Directors

As of February 2003



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The Boxborough Conservation Trust (BCT) is a non-profit, tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) corporation. Our mailing address is 462 Hill Road Boxborough, MA 01719, Tel: 978/264-0113
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From the President

Since our October newsletter, we have been working to meet our responsibilities as co-holder of the conservation restriction on the 53-acre Panek parcel in the Patch Hill Conservation Area. Barbara Warren, a member of both the BCT board and the Conservation Commission, prepared a superb Land Use and Management Plan; we organized a sizeable work party to remove invasive Oriental bittersweet near the Liberty Square Road access point; sponsored a walk led by Dave Koonce to acquaint townspeople with this beautiful land; and mowed a meadow in the adjoining Richards parcel.

We are deeply grateful to Simon Bunyard, a founder of the BCT and senior engineer on the "Big Dig," who auctioned a walking tour through the project on Dec. 29 for 20 people, raising \$3,000 for the BCT.

Our annual meeting on March 23 will feature a presentation by Ron McAdow, new executive director of The Sudbury Valley Trustees and renowned wildlife photographer.

Among our objectives for 2003 are to improve BCT's website and to help create an updated trail guide for Boxborough's conservation lands. Above all, we continue to work with landowners on ways to protect and preserve the town's remaining open land.

From the Editor

In the October issue, we launched a new look to our newsletter and, as promised, we selected a new name beginning with this issue. To all those who voted or made suggestions, we thank you.

The purpose of the BCT and our newsletter is to promote the preservation of the rural character of Boxborough and the conservation and protection of natural resources. These include wetlands, woodlands, agricultural lands and open spaces, and the animal and plant life thereon. Wanting a name that reflected our goals, we selected *Common Ground*. Webster defines common as "... belonging or relating to the community at large..." and ground as "...any particular piece of land; esp. one set aside for a specified purpose..."

We hope that you enjoy this and future issues of *Common Ground* and find them to be informative, thought provoking and inspiring. Your comments and letters are welcome! Write to: Editor, *Common Ground*, 1093 Liberty Square Road, Boxborough, MA 01719



The earth is common ground and ... gradually the idea is taking form that the land must be held in safekeeping, that one generation is to some extent responsible to the next. . .

- E.B. White

Patch Hill Area Stewardship

BY DAVID KOONCE

The primary purpose of Boxborough's Spring 2002 acquisition of the 103-acre Patch Hill Conservation Area (PHCA), and the basis on which the Town was awarded a \$500,000 Massachusetts Self-Help Grant toward the purchase, is the conservation of native biodiversity. PHCA supports a wide variety of native plant communities and wildlife habitats, including abandoned fruit orchards, vernal pools, intermittent and perennial streams, and what may be Boxborough's finest example of mature hardwood forest.

The PHCA acquisition expands previously existing adjacent Town-owned conservation land to create a 200+ acre preserve considered by the Conservation Commission and BCT to be an "Area of Critical Environmental Concern" (ACEC). The combined lands also protect white and pitch pine forest, open fields, several dozen vernal pools, and other important wetland and water resources. The ACEC's different habitat types combine to create an ecosystem sustaining one of Boxborough's most varied collections of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates. At least two rare species live within the ACEC, and nearly every tree species native to New England can be found there (the American sycamore appears to be absent). Per unit area, no other region of Boxborough contains as high a concentration of biomass.

In order to satisfy requirements of the Self-Help Grant, a Land Use and Management Plan has been developed for Patch Hill. A Stewardship Team of interested



volunteers has been assembled in partnership with the Boxborough Conservation Commission. One of the most important provisions of the plan is to prevent the spread of invasive exotic vegetation. Many visitors have seen first-hand the damage already caused by the Oriental bittersweet proliferating in the area just beyond the Liberty Square Road parking lot. If allowed to continue, it will crowd out native plant species in the immediate vicinity, eventually overrunning and killing even large, mature trees. Members of the Stewardship Team have begun removing the bittersweet by hand (there is no other method), but it will, literally, be a never-ending struggle to keep the destructive vine in check. Multiflora rose is another invasive exotic that needs to be dealt with at PHCA. (See article on next page.)

A second aspect of the Land Management Plan is trail creation and maintenance. Since the land was purchased with a network of trails already in place, only one new trail, connecting to previously existing conservation land, will be cleared. All trails will be marked. The Boxborough Highway Department will be constructing boardwalks where trails cross over sensitive wet areas. The Stewardship Team will regularly monitor the condition of trails and carry out trail maintenance as needed. Patch Hill trail guides and maps will be available in the not-too-distant future.

McAdow to Speak at Annual Meeting

BY LISA ST. AMAND

Want to learn about the secret lives of your wild neighbors? Look no further than the BCT annual meeting, to be held at 7:00 PM, Sunday March 23, in the Blanchard Memorial School gymnasium. We will feature a slide show by noted local naturalist and author Ron McAdow, who was recently named Executive Director of the Sudbury Valley Trustees.

Following a brief business meeting, Mr. McAdow will discuss "The Wildlife Trails Education Project," aka "The Camera in the Woods." Yes, the wild neighbors we are talking about include bobcat, fisher and coyote. Come see what they are up to when they think we aren't watching. This program is open to the public and we encourage you to bring your children. Refreshments will be served. For more information, contact Lisa St. Amand.

Blanchard Grade Four
2002 T-Shirt
Design Contest Winner:

MARISSA C.



Shirts are \$15 each and may be ordered by calling Glynis Hamel.

Alien Invaders – Part II: Multiflora Rose

BY GLYNIS HAMEL, STAFF WRITER

I spend a lot of time in my backyard here in Boxborough waging a seemingly endless battle against poison ivy. Most people would agree that poison ivy is an undesirable plant, and therefore a weed, but it is not considered an invasive plant. The non-native invasive plants that are of so much concern to plant ecologists are those that cause harm by developing self-sustaining populations and becoming dominant in native ecosystems. Although poison ivy is tenacious and aggressive, it is not likely to grow at densities to exclude all other vegetation. And as natural succession occurs in a forest, the population of poison ivy is reduced; it doesn't grow as well in a dense forest as it does in an open field. This month's featured invader, multiflora rose, shows no such restraint.

A shrub of arching habit, multiflora rose seems to have a lot to recommend it. The thorny branches are covered with a profusion of small but undeniably attractive white or pinkish-white flowers in late spring, which perfume the air as sweetly as any cultivated rose. The small, red rosehips, which appear late in the summer, gradually dry to form leathery capsules that serve as important winter food for many birds. The shrub provides wildlife cover for pheasant, bobwhite, and other birds and small mammals.

It is for these and other reasons that multiflora rose was able to gain such a strong foothold in the United States. Introduced to the U.S. in the 1860's from Japan, it was originally used as rootstock for the grafting of ornamental roses. In the 1930's, the U.S. Soil Conservation Service advocated planting multiflora rose for



Multiflora rose.

Flowers and leaves (summer).

Rose hips and thorns (winter).

Original illustration by Linda Coe, member, Boxborough Conservation Trust

soil erosion projects, and it was also widely planted as a living fence to confine livestock. More recently, hedges of multiflora rose were used as crash barriers and as a means to reduce headlight glare in the medians of highways. As recently as the 1960's, rooted cuttings were given away by state conservation groups to property owners.

The promotion of this plant has proven to be an expensive mistake. Like other non-native invasives, multiflora rose displays rapid growth and can spread to cover large areas in a short period of time. A medium-sized bush can produce as many as 1 million seeds in one growing season; these seeds remain viable in the soil for as long as 20 years. The plant is also capable of reproducing vegetatively by producing roots where

its drooping canes touch the ground. The shrub forms impenetrable thickets that prevent the establishment of native plant species. It is highly competitive for soil nutrients, and has led to reduced crop yields on adjacent agricultural fields.

The good news is that multiflora rose can be controlled by repeated cutting or mowing. Cutting the canes to the ground 3 – 6 times per year, over a period of three or four years, has been proven effective. But you must be faithful! Intermittent cutting will just allow the plant to become stronger as the root system reacts to the pruning by becoming bigger. Smaller plants can be pulled out by the roots; however, the resulting disturbance to the soil could bring buried seeds to surface. Like other invasive plants, multiflora rose thrives in disturbed areas. To reduce soil disturbance, tamp the soil back down, and cover it with mulch. It is best to pull the roots in the spring when the soil is moist and before a new year's seed production has begun.

Despite its charms, multiflora rose is a marauding invader whose progress must be stopped!

SOURCES:

Eckhardt, Nancy, The Nature Conservancy, Element Stewardship Abstract for *Rosa Multiflora*, 1987.

Christopher Mattrick, (Rare Plant Curator of the New England Wild Flower Society), Workshop on Invasive Plants, October, 2002.

Invasive Plants: Weeds of the Global Garden, John M. Randall and Janet Marinelli, editors. Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1996.

"Rogues Gallery: New England's Notable Invasives", Frances H. Clark, Chris Mattrick, & Sarah Shonbrun, eds., Conservation Notes of the N. E. Wildflower Society, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1998.

New Member Registration



BCT welcomes new members to join in the effort of preserving and protecting Boxborough's undeveloped land. Anyone may join. Voting members must be 18 years of age or older and residents of Boxborough. All others are non-voting members. Membership is on an annual basis. There are several giving levels. Please indicate the level of your tax-deductible contribution.

Name(s) _____ Date _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

- \$25 - Individual
- \$50 - Family
- \$75 - Friend
- \$100 - Associate
- \$250 - Patron
- \$500 - Sustaining
- \$1000 - Sponsor
- \$2500 - Preservationist
- _____ Other

Please make your check payable to: The Boxborough Conservation Trust, and mail, with this form to: Treasurer, BCT, 60 Barteau Lane, Boxborough, MA 01719

An acknowledgement of your tax-deductible contribution will be mailed to you.

Please contact your employer to see if matching funds are available.

The BCT does not release information about members to third parties.

A Local "Keeping Track Team" Becomes a Reality



BY BARBARA WARREN

With BCT sponsorship, a group of Boxborough and Acton residents have formed a new Keeping Track Team. We call our group "Nashoba Wildlife Trackers" to reflect one of our goals: to think beyond local town boundaries and become part of a larger network of wildlife stewards. Through the Vermont-based non-profit, *Keeping Track, Inc.*, we have embarked on training to learn to interpret, record and monitor evidence of wildlife. Sound land conservation decisions and wildlife habitat stewardship

need to be based on an understanding of how the local and transient wildlife use our communities.

The first step is to identify important potential wildlife areas and corridors to determine the best locations for long-term monitoring. Then, four times a year, the team will walk designated transects collecting presence/absence data for river otter, mink, fisher, bobcat, black bear, and gray fox. These area-sensitive carnivores are good indicators of the region's health and ecological integrity. Moose as an expanding species and beaver as a

keystone species (having a disproportionate effect on its community for its size or abundance) will also be monitored. The collected information will be shared with BCT and other interested planning entities.

We still have openings for new members. No previous experience is needed, just a willingness to put the time in to learn and then monitor.

We will also be taking some tracking walks that will be open to the general public. Please let us know if you are interested in a walk in Boxborough.



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