



Letter from the President

by Rita Gibes Grossman

I returned to Boxborough after visiting family over the holidays with renewed energy to protect our heritage landscapes. In Michigan, the rural surroundings, rolling farms and grazing livestock of my childhood live on in memory only. While in South Florida, I listened to my in-laws lament the shopping centers and housing developments where farms and everglades once thrived. Inevitable growth and subsequent development is not inherently a "bad" thing; however, without a diligent, continuous effort to protect open land, it will slowly disappear one housing development, one strip mall and one office building at a time. I'm honored to be working with a committed group of board members and land owners who are interested in preserving Boxborough's open land and working farms.

in a hike on a beautiful day. The BCTrust hosted two well-attended and informative walks this past fall on town conservation areas. I thank Anne Gardulski for guiding us along the esker at the Beaver Brook Valley Preserve, and Jeff Coldwell and Diane Friedman for leading us through Wolf Swamp. I also welcome and extend my thanks to two new volunteers: Libby Reichlen, publicity coordinator, and Mitzi Weil, program committee member.

On Saturday evening, March 24, BCTrust will hold its Annual Meeting for members. (A once-a-year donation to the BCTrust is all it takes to be a member.) Tom Phelan, Ph.D., an environmental engineer at Geosyntec in Acton, whose specialty is remediation of contaminated groundwater sites and hydrogeology, will speak about

"I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use our natural resources, but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob by wasteful use, the generations that come after us."

Theodore Roosevelt

U.S. President (1901-1909), historian, naturalist, explorer, author, and soldier

Recently, the BCTrust hosted a meeting for landowners with guest speakers Bob Wilbur, director of land protection for the Massachusetts Audubon Society and Mark Robinson, executive director of the Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts, Inc. Both are well versed in conservation strategies, and they discussed newly enacted federal legislation increasing tax incentives for land conservation.

If you are a landowner who is interested in learning more about conservation options, these two Web sites are highly recommended: the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition at www.massland.org and the Land Trust Alliance at www.lta.org.

Providing education on the value of our natural resources is one enjoyable aspect of our work, especially when we're engaged

the timely topic of water resources and the issues that are relevant to Boxborough.

Last May, Massachusetts experienced record-breaking rainfall, and 2006 was the state's 10th wettest year since records were kept as of 1895 according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Boxborough's open space—and relative lack of impervious surfaces, compared to more developed communities—allowed for the accommodation of this generous amount of rainwater. Find out what happens to rain after it infiltrates the soil. Learn about the aquifer, the underground water reservoir for our wells and springs. Enjoy a relaxing evening out with other Boxborough residents who support the BCTrust. See the announcement in this issue for details.

Q&A

Unusual Winter Brings Unusual Sightings

by Andy Covell

Q: What types of birds spend the winter in Boxborough?

A. The variety of birds in our area during the winter is limited compared to the rest of the year. During the winter, people are likely to see year-round residents such as chickadees, titmice, finches juncos, nuthatches, cardinals, mourning doves, downy and hairy woodpeckers. Other year-round species such as red-tailed hawk, brown creeper, pileated woodpecker, Carolina wren, barred owl, great horned owl, and turkeys are more elusive. This year's warm winter weather has contributed to some unusual sightings. Kingfishers, which need open unfrozen water, have been spotted often. Red-bellied woodpeckers (a Southern species) are becoming more common.

Q: Is it safe to feed year-round, or does it make them dependent on humans?

A. Yes, it's perfectly safe. Birds get only a small percentage of their total food from bird feeders, so they don't become dependent on humans. In fact, there are several benefits to year-round bird feeding for both birds and humans. During the periods of spring and fall migration, many species of birds move into or through our region, traveling long distances in a relatively short amount of time. They benefit from the high-energy foods provided by humans such as seeds, nuts, fruit, and suet. In summer, adult birds are spending a great deal of their energy on breeding and raising young. Although there are more natural sources of food outside in summer, especially insects, bird feeders provide an easy source of high-energy nutrition. Bird feeding throughout the spring, summer, and fall is rewarding because we can see many more varieties of birds than we can during the winter—

(continued on page 3)

Take a Hike

Flagg Hill

Conservation Area (easy terrain)



**Saturday,
May 5, 1-3 pm**

Meet hike leader Jeff
Coldwell at Windemere
Drive parking lot.

Rain date: May 6

Call Jeff at 978-266-2858
to confirm.

Flagg Hill Conservation Area, jointly managed by the conservation commissions of Boxborough and Stow, includes a total of 286 acres; 80 are located in Boxborough. Access at Windemere Drive connects with a network of trails in the Stow conservation area. Flagg Hill itself is a glacial drumlin, similar to Patch Hill, and is believed to be the highest point in Boxborough, at 466 feet. Unlike Patch Hill, Flagg Hill has a relatively “young” forest. Up until 35 years ago, much of the land was cleared for differing uses, including a small commercial ski slope that operated in the 1960s and ’70s. Today, much of the forest consists of pines, poplars, and aspens typical of early growth. The area provides habitat for a variety of birds, white-tailed deer, Eastern coyote, red fox, raccoon, fisher, mink, and weasel. The steep sloped areas overlooking the excavated pond are home to owls, hawks, and other birds of prey that like to nest on the hillside. There are several vernal pools, including one that is registered with the state because it is home to the rare blue spotted salamander.

Recreational Uses — Walking, nature study, jogging, ice skating, cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing, fishing and canoeing. Sledding along the quarter-mile-long hill next to Windemere Drive is very good.

Trails — There are several well-maintained trails on this property with two access points, both with parking: one on Windemere Drive and the other on West Acton Road in Stow. At the Boxborough access area, near the pond and the kiosk, the red trail connects to the trail network in Stow. On the east side of Windemere Drive, you’ll find a second, shorter set of trails. You can download a map from www.sudburyvalleytrustees.org.

Sources: Dave Bull, Dave Koonce, Town of Boxborough website, Sudbury Valley Trustees website.

BCTrust Hosts First Walk on Beaver Brook Esker

By David Bull
BCTrust Board Member

On an Indian summer Saturday in November, the BCTrust held its first official walk on the Beaver Brook Valley Preserve, the 82-acre conservation parcel that the trust received two months earlier from the Nature Conservancy. About 40 people participated, including Boxborough Junior Girl Scout Troop 2040 and Robb Johnson and his family. Robb is the Southeastern Massachusetts Program Director for the Nature Conservancy and worked closely with the BCTrust on the transfer. The Nature Conservancy, which acquired the property for conservation through five separate land transactions between 1965 and 1975, transferred the parcel to the BCTrust in September.



Walking the Beaver Brook Esker: Nature Conservancy representative Robb Johnson (left) and BCTrust member Dave Steiner, who volunteers as a steward for the property.

The walk was led by Anne Gardulski, a member of the BCTrust board and chair of the Tufts University geology department. With its new oversight and stewardship responsibility for the Beaver Brook land, the BCTrust was eager to sponsor the walk because of the parcel’s unique and interesting geological features.



Anne Gardulski, resident geologist on the BCTrust board, guided walkers along the top of the Ice Age esker that covers almost all of the Beaver Brook preserve’s 82 acres.

As Anne explained, “This land contains one of the only largely undisturbed glacial eskers in Massachusetts, and we are very fortunate to have it intact.” Most eskers in the area have been quarried over time for their rock and gravel content, which is commercially useful for construction.

What’s an Esker?

Basically, it’s “a pile of glacial debris,” Anne said. Eskers form when a stream flows beneath a glacier. The Beaver Brook esker was deposited by one of the glaciers that covered much of New England during the last Ice Age. As this glacier melted and receded north, the stream underneath deposited sand and boulders. This sediment remained even after the ice completely melted, providing the dramatic ridge that we can walk on today.

The Beaver Brook Valley esker covers almost the entire 82 acres. Much of the conservation trail runs along the top of the esker and offers spectacular views of Beaver Brook to the west, and other forested and glacial landscape features to the east.



Members of Boxborough Junior Girl Scout Troop 2040 with Robb Johnson, on the Beaver Brook walk.

To visit the Beaver Brook Valley Preserve, follow Route 111 West (from Boxborough toward Harvard), turn right on Swanson Road and right again to a parking area at the end of Whitcomb Road, where you will find the access trail. Wear hiking boots or sturdy shoes, as some sections of the trail can be rugged and wet.



Frank Coolidge, a founder and first president of the BCTrust, Barbara Tornstrom and Jeff Fuhrer, outgoing board member and past president, at the Beaver Brook walk.

BCTrust Supports Eagle Scout Project

Steven Alsen from Troop 1 Boxborough recently completed a wooden bridge and walkway project at the Acton-Boxborough Regional High School for his Eagle Scout badge. When he began the project last fall, he wrote to the BCTrust, among other organizations, to ask for donations. "My project is the construction of bridges that will allow easier access to the trail behind the football practice field," Steve wrote in his letter. "The area that they go over is muddy and usually becomes a marsh after a heavy rain. It is home to some insects and other small creatures and my bridges will help preserve their habitat. The biology classes at the high school use this trail to study wildlife as part of their curriculum, and my bridges will allow them to study without being a disturbance." The BCTrust donated \$100 to help Steve cover the cost of wood and other supplies.



Steve Alsen (center) of Boy Scout Troop 1 Boxborough recently completed construction of a wooden bridge and walkways behind the A-B football field. Steve's father, Dave Alsen, and his grandfather, Robert Casella, helped him put pieces in place.

Q&A (continued from front page)

such as rose-breasted grosbeaks, scarlet tanagers, phoebes, orioles, vireos, and many types of warblers. Summer is also the time to observe the behavior of young birds as their parents escort them to bird feeders.

Q: Not many birds are coming to my birdfeeders. Why is that?

A. Our native birds move around a local area to find the best natural source of food. This may result in decreased bird activity in your yard for a few days or even longer. However, if your birdfeeders are inconsistently used by birds over a long period there may be a problem with the location of the feeders and the overall "bird habitat" in your yard. Birds won't feed at birdfeeders if they detect predators such as hawks and cats. So it's important to provide protective cover within 12 feet of your birdfeeder in the form of shrubs or trees. Plants also provide birds with their primary source of food: berries, fruit, seeds, nectar, and flowers that attract insects.

Q: What landscape plants are good for attracting birds?

A. Plants that produce berries and fruit such as viburnum, dogwood, blueberry, elderberry, grapes, and crabapples are excellent. Many perennials and ornamental grasses produce seeds that birds love such as coneflower, joe pye weed, asters, and black-eyed susans. The flowers of lobelia, monarda, salvia, and many others produce nectar for hummingbirds and the insects that birds eat. Good shelter plants include evergreens such as rhododendron, juniper, holly, pine, and hemlock.

Q: Is there anything else that helps attract birds?

A. People underestimate the value of water. Birds need water (unfrozen) year-round for drinking and bathing. During hot summer drought and cold winter periods, it's harder for birds to find water than food. At times, a bird bath can attract more birds than a birdfeeder. Like birdfeeders, shelter plants near a bird bath are important. In winter, you'll need a heater to keep the bird bath unfrozen. Birds are also attracted to water in motion, so adding a dripper or wiggler to a bird bath is a great idea.

Andy Covell is the owner of The Bird House Garden Center in Boxborough and a member of the BCTrust. For more information contact him at The_Bird_House@comcast.net

Blanchard Students Report 30,529 Pounds of Paper Recycled



By Tara Zantow

In the last issue of Common Ground, the BCTrust publicized the start of the Blanchard Memorial School Recycling Project with our annual writing contest. Now at mid-year, the project is well launched in the school and the Boxborough community at large. According to project coordinator Liz Sheldon, the 6th grade students have completed their research on the benefits of recycling, developed public service announcements, presented them to the lower grades, and designed spreadsheets to track collection activity on a monthly basis. In addition to the school community, townspeople and employees of area businesses are also participating by recycling their old magazines, paperback books, newspapers, and scrap paper in the large green and yellow Abitibi dumpsters located in the school parking lot. As of Jan. 30, the students reported that 30,529 pounds of paper has been hauled away by the Abitibi recycling company. The school receives \$5 to \$15 per ton of paper, depending on the amount collected. More importantly, the recycling program saves about 17 trees per ton and is raising awareness in the community. In the coming weeks, look for a new banner promoting the school's recycling efforts, donated by the BCTrust. Please support the school and help protect our environment by bringing your paper (no cardboard or phonebooks, please) to the Blanchard recycling bins.

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For email contact information, go to www.bctrust.org/DirectorsBylaws.html

Common Ground is mailed quarterly to all Boxborough residents, free of charge.

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Lynn Stahlberg, editor
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Anna Bograd, layout
Hugh Fortmiller, board liaison

The Boxborough Conservation Trust is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

In the last issue of Common Ground, the designer of the BCTrust logo was incorrectly identified. The designer is Jamie Aromaa.

Thank You!

The BCTrust received contributions from these new and renewing members since the last issue of *Common Ground*.

Christensen Family
Sarah and John Deyst
Driscoll Family
John Evans
Michael and Dee Fleming

Glynis Hamel
Hanlon Family
Hubley Family
David and Annelies Reilly
Nancy Settle-Murphy and Family



www.bctrust.org

Please take a look at our redesigned website:

- Photos of Boxborough's conservation lands and links to trail maps
- Back issues of *Common Ground*
- Links to a variety of conservation websites
- New member registration

Take a Hike with the BCTrust

Flagg Hill

Conservation Area (easy terrain)



**Saturday, May 5
1-3 pm**

Meet hike leader Jeff Coldwell at Windemere Drive parking lot. For hike details, see page 2.

Rain date: May 6

March 24 Annual Meeting: You're Invited!



Tom Phelan, Ph.D., an environmental engineer at Geosyntec in Acton, will be the guest speaker at the BCTrust's Annual Meeting on March 24. Dr. Phelan, whose specialty is remediation of contaminated groundwater sites and hydrogeology, will provide an update on the aquifer in the Boxborough area and talk about the importance of wetlands in sustaining the town's groundwater. All members of the BCTrust are invited to attend. Not a member? Make a donation to the BCTrust, and you're in! Appetizers, desserts, and beverages will be served.

Where: 110 Barteau Lane, Ruth Zimmerman and Simon Bunyard's home

When: 6:30-9:30 pm Saturday, March 24

RSVP: ruth@simonbunyard.com



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