



Common Ground

Winter 2009
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Preserving and Protecting Boxborough's Undeveloped Land

The Boxborough Esker Exploring what the last ice age left behind

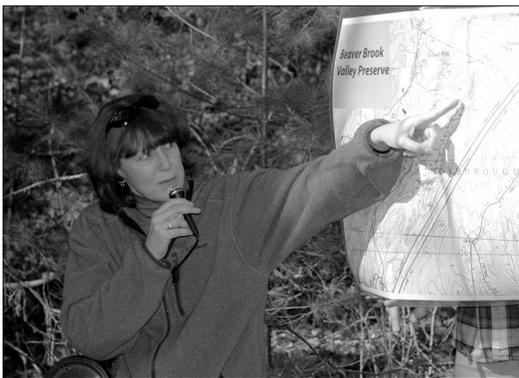


Last month, BCTrust board member Anne Gardulski (below left) led a "geo hike" along the esker in the town's Beaver



Brook Valley Preserve. Board president Rita Grossman (above) brought the refreshments. The 82-acre parcel is managed by the Trust and hosts a variety of ecological systems, from low wetlands to a prominent esker (top left and right), which was formed at the end of the last ice age. Access and parking for the trail are located at the end of Swanson Road in Boxborough, just beyond the entrance to Cisco's campus.

Photos by Frank Sibley



Good news! We're saving twice the land we're developing

Mass Audubon reports a welcome trend on its Web site (www.massaudubon.org): "For the first time in decades, we are saving twice as much land as we are developing. Thanks to the collaborative work of state environmental agencies and conservation organizations, no longer is Bay State open space gobbled up at the rate of 40 acres a day. For every acre developed, two are protected. The bad news is that new houses being built today are bigger and more energy-intensive than ever." In its Losing Ground series, Mass Audubon has analyzed changes in land use since 1991. On their Web site, you can download the latest issue of Losing Ground (released May 18, 2009) and explore land protection by town, county, watershed, Regional Planning Agency (RPA), or ecoregion, including data on land use, development, amount of land protected, ecological integrity, as well as changes over time.

Letter from the President

By Rita Gibes Grossman

In early November, Anne Gardulski, BCTrust board member and Tufts professor of geology, led a "geo hike" on Boxborough's esker at the Beaver Brook Valley Preserve. In what is promising to become a tradition, about 35 of us were treated to a two-hour tour along the base and crest of one of New England's longest surviving eskers. A rich source of gravel, many of New England's eskers have been sacrificed for road construction—as was the northern portion of Boxborough's esker. Formed about 15,000 years ago by streams flowing within or beneath a glacier, and often extending for miles, an esker is the ridge of sedimentary deposit that remains as the glacier melts.

Standing on the esker's ridge, with Muddy Pond on one side and Beaver Brook on the other, I listened to Prof. Gardulski's narrative and realized how these magnificent views and this awe-inspiring natural landmark could have just as easily been reduced to interstate infrastructure had it not been for the diligent work of Boxborough resident **George Krusen**.

In the early 1960s, Mr. Krusen engaged The Nature Conservancy and private landowners to doggedly pursue the protection of these 82 acres. TNC deeded the Beaver Brook Valley Preserve to the care and protection of the BCTrust in 2006. Thank you to George Krusen for his vision and for his years of stewardship service along with Boxborough residents **Doug Barrus** and **Dave Steiner** in maintaining this land. As we revise the Trust's Web site, we will present more details on the history of this parcel.

continued on the next page

Q&A

Deer-proof landscaping? No, but there's hope

By Andy Covell

White-tailed deer, native New England residents, inflict thousands of dollars worth of damage to plants in gardens and landscapes in Boxborough each year. By planting deer-resistant plants, or plants preferred less by deer, you can reduce the amount of deer damage in your yard.

Do deer prefer certain plants? And what time of year does most damage occur?

Much deer damage occurs during the winter when deer favor evergreen plants such as yews, arborvitae, or rhododendrons. Damage is most severe when snow cover or extreme cold has reduced natural food availability. During these times, deer look for anything green to eat, and evergreen landscaping plants are easy targets.

Early spring produces a flush of new growth on landscaping plants. Deer relish this soft, new growth as it is high in water content. Deer prefer flower buds and new foliage but will eat almost anything in spring, especially hosta, tulips, roses, day lilies, blueberry bushes, and fruit trees.

Are there any deer-proof plants?

No plant can be considered totally deer-proof. Local deer populations have differing preferences and develop feeding habits based on population pressure, food competition, and weather conditions. However, deer tend to avoid eating plants that are highly aromatic, have a bitter taste, have prickly or coarse leaves, or have caustic or sticky sap. There are many plants that are seldom damaged by deer.

What deer-resistant plants are recommended for landscaping in our region?

Andromeda (*Pieris*) and inkberry (*Ilex glabra*) are two hardy evergreen shrubs that are reliably deer resistant. There are relatively few evergreens that deer don't like, and andromeda and inkberry are excellent replacements for yews, arborvitae, or rhododendrons that are frequently damaged in the winter.

Living with *Odocoileus virginianus*

Whether you delight in *Odocoileus virginianus* (white-tailed deer) browsing in your backyard or despair for your carefully selected shrubs, living in Boxborough means living with deer. We offer prime deer habitat—plenty of undeveloped land abutting cultivated landscapes—and the deer are thriving. The consequences of overpopulation are significant: damage to our forests, crops, lawns and gardens; an increase in deer-related automobile accidents; and a rise in the incidence of Lyme disease, which is transmitted by infected deer ticks.

The town-commissioned Boxborough Deer Control Study Committee has been studying deer-control alternatives and is expected to make its recommendations to the Board of Selectmen in January 2010. For more information on their work and links to articles of interest on this topic, please see visit the town Web site: www.town.boxborough.ma.us/DeerCommittee.html.

For perennial beds or mixed borders, there are many colorful choices such as yarrow (*Achillea*), bee balm (*Monarda*), Russian sage (*Perovskia*), false indigo (*Baptisia*), lenten rose (*Helleborus*), and butterfly bush (*Buddleia*). Ornamental grasses are highly resistant and offer a nice contrast to shrubs and perennials. Ferns are rarely browsed by deer and make an attractive addition to a shady garden. Spring bulbs such as daffodils, scilla, and allium are good alternatives to the tulips and crocus that deer prefer.

Deer tend to avoid herbs because of the strong fragrances and flavors. Try using thyme, sage, or oregano as ornamental plants in your flower beds. Annual flowers such as snapdragons, coleus, cosmos, and marigolds can be featured in gardens in deer territory. A comprehensive list of deer-resistant plants is available at The Bird House Garden Center.

Many of my favorite plants are not deer resistant. What can I do?

One approach is to divide your landscape into deer zones. Locate deer-prone plants in areas closest to the house where they can be protected with fencing or repellent more easily. In the zone farthest from the house, plant only deer-resistant varieties. In between, use a mix of resistant and non-resistant plants, and accept that there may be occasional deer damage. This would be a good area to plant some herbs as natural repellents. In general, be thoughtful about where you plant deer-prone plants. Avoid planting them close to established deer magnets.

Will planting some deer-resistant plants solve the problem in my yard?

Probably not. Deer may return to feed on your non-resistant plants. The most effective way to keep deer away from these landscaping plants is to erect a temporary, reusable deer fence made from plastic mesh. Deer-repellent sprays, such as Liquid Fence, are another alternative. Taste and scent deterrents in the spray are effective in keeping deer away, and they can be used year round.

Andy Covell is a member of the BCTrust and owner of The Bird House Garden Center.

President's Letter

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Transitions and thanks

Welcome to new board member **Simon Bunyard**, a founding BCTrust member who brings expertise in database and project management, and in public service to the board.

Along with fellow members of the board, I thank **Jeff Coldwell**, who for the past four years has managed all the stewardship issues for the Trust, including the Beaver Brook Valley Preserve. Jeff has been a tremendous asset to the Trust. Both his sense of humor and his contributions will be greatly missed as he leaves the board.

Thank you to board member **Scott Bundy** for donating an iTouch for our Agricultural Fair raffle, which raised over \$300. **Brad Hardie** of Boxborough was the lucky winner!

Thanks to all our current members!



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

Editorial Staff:

Lynn Stahlberg, editor
 Tara Zantow, assistant editor
 Hugh Fortmiller, board liaison

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

This list includes members who have made an annual contribution to the BCTrust between November 2008 and 2009.

* **Charter member** (donated \$500 before first annual meeting in 1999)

Non-resident or corporate donor

www.bctrust.org

The BCTrust updates its Web pages on a regular basis. Take a look!

- See photos of favorite walking paths
- Print out trail maps before you hike
- Link to other conservation Web sites
- Find options for preserving your land

BCTrust needs your help to preserve land

The Boxborough Conservation Trust is actively engaged in preserving the town's undeveloped land for conservation, agriculture, and recreational uses. The Trust urgently needs and gratefully appreciates donations in any amount. One hundred percent of every donation is used to fund land-preservation efforts.

Please send your tax-deductible contribution to:

BCTrust
P.O. Box 626
Acton, MA 01720



Holiday Fundraiser

Saturday, Dec. 12

9 am - 6 pm



The Bird House Garden Center

Rte. 111, Boxborough



The Bird House to host 2nd annual fundraiser, 5% of sales will benefit the BCTrust

Saturday, Dec. 12, is the day to make a serious dent in your holiday shopping and, while you're at it, make a much-needed donation to the BCTrust. The Bird House owners Andy and Maggie Covell are generously hosting a day-long fundraiser, just in time for the holidays. You'll find a great selection of holiday greens and decorations, jewelry and crafts by local artists, gifts for all the birders on your list, and Christmas trees and wreaths. Enjoy hot mulled cider and donuts while you shop and, as you check off the items on your list, remember that 5% of every purchase you make goes directly to the Trust.



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