



Newsletter

Preserving open space since 1959

FALL 2021



In August, Dr. Robert Gegear, professor of biology at UMass, Dartmouth, and Founder and Director of the Beecology Project, visited seven of the Land Trust's properties to consult about land management strategies that can benefit declining native pollination systems. A pollination system encompasses both the plant and animal interaction, and it is essential to include both when talking about helping our wild pollinators.

Dr. Gegear recommended ways to create a good habitat for the full life cycle of at-risk pollinating insects—from guidance about nesting sites and host plants to ensuring nectar and pollen sources from early spring through late fall. He advised us on mowing regimes and the value of protecting early blooming plants from mowing. Dr. Gegear recommended leaving pithy stemmed species, such as joe-pye weed and bluestem, for above-ground nesting insects, and loose, bare soil or clumps of native grasses for ground nesters. When providing enhancements, he encouraged us to focus on flowering plants that target more of the native, at-risk species, and to plant in massings (one square meter/species) versus mixing plants together.

Dr. Gegear will return to a few of the sites in the springtime to make observations of the willow, blueberry and meadowsweet plant species in particular and the pollinator visitors they attract.

Just Like That—A Forest!

by Joan Ferguson

NINETEEN volunteers showed up on September 18th to get their hands dirty—literally! Land Trust members, high schoolers, parents and gardeners joined together to install a woodland at Fairhaven Overlook (aka the Bay House site) in the Wright Woods. The new plants—123 of them—are all native species, adapted to the drier soils of this area as well as a changing climate: white and black oaks, pignut hickories, hazelnuts and witchhazels. Parterre Ecological helped organize the planting, including demonstrating best practices for how to prepare and position nursery potted specimens in the ground.

The reforestation effort is part of the Land Trust's plan to restore to a more natural condition the site of the summer house of Helen Robinson Wright, the major donor of the Wright Woods property.

The expansive view across Fairhaven Bay from the terrace—a favorite destination of many visitors—will be maintained, while the surrounding area will be naturalized in keeping with the forested expanse of the larger property and region.

Although only 3,375 square feet in area, the recent planting demonstrates what is needed for a climate-resilient woodland: diverse and heat-tolerant species, younger trees that help diversify the even-aged stands in the surrounding woods, fencing to prevent deer predation (a 7½ foot deer fence was erected before planting) and the absence of invasive species.

We look forward (with fingers crossed) to watching this planting mature, and hope that the many volunteers who made it possible will also stop by to appreciate their handiwork.

Right: CLCT trail steward, Joe Stein (foreground), and trustee, Jeff Wieand (background).

Inset below: Gabe of Parterre Ecological giving a planting demonstration.





Pondering What Produced a Bizarre Tree in Concord

by Richard T. T. Forman

IMAGINE a tree trunk 15 ft tall and almost 5 ft in diameter. Its four main branches average nearly 2 ft diam, and extend outward some 30 to 50 ft. Small animal tunnels and dens perforate the trunk above flood levels. Almost dead, the “horizontal tree” still produces a tiny cluster of three dozen live sprouts.

This willow hybrid (*Salix x meyeriana*) from Europe grows in an isolated group of savanna trees in French’s Meadow. It’s only a half-mile from Monument Square, 900 ft north of the Nashawtuc bridge, and 300 ft

south of the former Sudbury River bridge site. Since 1860, railroad magnate Charles H. Hurd, engineer William Wheeler, writer Allen French, and the Concord Land Conservation Trust (1961–) have owned the wet meadow.

How old is the willow? The hybrid was named in 1811, and introduced to America by 1880. The railway bridge was built in 1879 (and destroyed in the 1938 mega-hurricane). The Nashawtuc bridge appeared in 1883. Apparently no 1880s-1905 Hosmer, Gleason or Munroe photo of the tree site exists. An expert on English historical vegetation, George F. Peterken, observes

(2021): “As to your willow, it does look like the older trees that one can still find on our floodplains...I’d say it dates from the late 19th century.” The 1879 railway bridge provided convenient access to the tree site.

Why plant this willow? From 1835, an Assabet River powdermill made gunpowder from sulfur, saltpeter and 10-20% charcoal, ending with three 1940 explosions. Willow apparently produces the finest charcoal for gunpowder, and also for sketching and osier (basket-weaving, etc.). In 1851, Henry Thoreau saw George Dugan carting willow to the powdermill along the Fitchburg Turnpike in June, and past his Main Street home in August.

Back up momentarily. Most English settlers grew up with a landscape of lollipop-shaped trees. For centuries, European trees were widely “pollarded”—decapitated, with masses of rapid regrowth branches—to produce firewood, livestock fodder, kitchen utensils, and more. Seemingly Concord had no basket-weaving phase, willow makes poor firewood, and branches grown for livestock forage are unlikely after 1900. Yet decades of pruning presumably sculpted this tree. Did early residents bring pollarding to Concord? Or did it appear with gunpowder manufacture? Is this willow the only remnant of such an important process?

A bizarre tree, a distinctive use, a unique town of endless discovery.

(I thank Ray Angelo, Lawrence Buell, Anke Voss, Anne Forbes, George Peterken, and Barbara Forman.)

Gathering at the Annual Meeting—*finally!*

We were thrilled to be able to join with over 60 members, friends, families, and trustees for the Annual Meeting at Upper Spencer Brook Valley on Sunday, October 17. Two trustees, Fred Mulligan and Jeff Wieand, were re-elected. Special thanks to Nominating Committee members Lynn Huggins (trustee), Jeff Adams and Harvey Thayer, and to our walk leaders, Richard Forman, Peter Alden, Debbie Alvarez and Jane Gruba-Chevalier.

Our thanks to everyone for your support!

Right: Board chair, Polly Reeve, addresses members and friends.

Below: Scavenger hunt participants and future conservationists!



This time of year our thoughts turn gratefully to our membership and community partners. It is in



Troop 507 leaving Scout Island after an evening of camping fun.

SCOUTS RETURN TO BROOKS "SCOUT" ISLAND AFTER COVID HIATUS!



Troop 507 sitting in a council ring on Scout Island.

by Mann Shoffner, Scoutmaster

SCOUT Troop 507 of Winchester, MA has been instilling the timeless values of preparing youth for life since 1932. Currently, Troop 507 is a very active group of approximately 70 enthusiastic and committed boys and girls. The Troop meets regularly, with weekly Troop meetings and monthly camping trips. Scouts also organize and participate in numerous community service activities throughout the year.

In October, the Troop took a

two-day canoe trip on the Sudbury River, staying overnight on Scout Island. It was a great weekend and a new experience for many of the Scouts who went. The Troop also did its duty to leave the area cleaner than when they arrived by collecting and carrying out trash it found along the river and on Scout Island. The Troop is extremely grateful to the Concord Land Conservation Trust for giving it the opportunity to experience the beauty of this wonderful resource so close to home.

CONTRIBUTE TO CONSERVATION

Each fall the Land Trust sends out its annual appeal. Your sustained support, together with that of your neighbors, makes the preservation and enjoyment of Concord's natural areas possible. If you have not done so already, please send your contribution to P.O. Box 141, Concord, MA 01742 or renew at concordland.org/support-clct.

Of Fields and Farmers

Concord's annual Ag Day in September was a particularly festive event this year. The trustees who staffed the Land Trust table greeted members and introduced other attendees to the role that we have long played in supporting farming in town. Large posters celebrated the farmers who lease our land: Steve Verrill and Chip Poutasse at Miller Farm, Eric Nelson at the Kazmaier Land, Dan Pickard (and this past summer Bill Kenney) at the Corey-Bourquin Field and Mark Duffy at Hartwell Meadow. To view the posters, go to www.concordland.org/trust.



this spirit that the Land Trust says thank you and sends best wishes to all for warm, happy holidays.

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NOTES FROM THE FIELD



Deer Hunting Season

The Land Trust allows bow hunting with written permission only to a small group of local hunters, who also get permission from abutting property owners, in the Wright Woods and at the Bigelow Woods and Hubbard Brook Farmfield properties. An overabundant deer population is negatively impacting the ecology of the forested habitat and this management program aims to check the continued growth of the herd. Hunting season runs through December 31. Please pay attention to posted signs.

New Wayfinding and Markers in Anderson Woods

New, red trail markers with the CLCT logo have replaced the white markers along the secondary trail in the Anderson Woods. Additionally, wayfinding maps have been hung at each end of this inner trail. The main loop remains marked with white CLCT disks. These additions provide clarity to hikers navigating in the woods. Many



Art Schwope hangs wayfinding signs in the Anderson Woods.

thanks to volunteer Trail Steward, Art Schwope, for helping to make these changes.



Jumping worms and telltale granular soil at Upper Spencer Brook Valley.

Jumping Worms in Concord

Amyntas spp., commonly referred to as "jumping worms, crazy worms, or snake worms," has been observed at the trailhead of the Upper Spencer Brook Valley property and along the trail in Simon Willard Woods,

as well as in other Concord locations and across the state. Loose, granular soil is one telltale sign. This invasive worm negatively impacts forest soils and garden mulches. To learn more, go to "Earthworms" at www.ag.umass.edu/landscape/fact-sheets

Leave the Leaves

Leaf "litter" provides food, shelter and nesting for many wildlife species, including many caterpillars that rely on leaves to complete their development. Leaves are a natural mulch that can suppress weeds and fertilize soils, plus they are abundant and free! Leave them under trees and keep them in garden beds. Too many? Compost. Share with neighbors and friends. Make a brush pile to shelter native wildlife. Read more at www.gardenforwildlife.org

