



P.O. Box 60566, Florence, MA 01062

Dedicated to the preservation of open space and the promotion of affordable housing

BBC Profiles: Carmen Ahearn

“It is the people who are drawn to work in nature conservancy that I like!” Carmen has found so many friends and like-minded people around nature preserves all her life that the hard work she does becomes pleasurable as well. It doesn’t hurt that it makes a difference to the wilderness to control and direct humans’ use of it. Technical trail enhancement is a very desirable skill for enhancing the co-existence of nature’s beauty and human appreciation of it.

Carmen grew up in Wisconsin taking expanses of nature for granted. When she came to New York in the early 1950s she knew she needed to get into the woods occasionally. She joined a hiking club and many weekends took the 42nd Street ferry to the train station on the west of the Hudson and traveled to Harriman State park for \$3.00 round trip! For longer weekends it was the Catskills and for summer vacations the Adirondacks. In the Adirondacks, Carmen saw over the years how well maintained the trails were. She began to notice the techniques for maintaining those highly traveled trails used by the State of New York and by the Adirondack Mountain Club.

In 1976 Carmen moved to Northampton, to a house near Fitzgerald Lake. One day she joined a work crew cutting brush on the earthen dam forming the lake, to prevent its being weakened by the roots of the brush. The trails in the area had been well designed originally, but had not been maintained for some time. Carmen signed up for a Mass. Dept. of Environmental Management course in trail maintenance and learned the techniques of placing water bars in strategic locations and of making a muddy trail passable with the use of stepping stones. The use of stones avoided the likelihood people would walk around the muddy spot and ruin a much larger swath of woods.

Over a period of 7 years, volunteers repaired the trails using updated techniques. One summer a group of Americorps young people finished the stepping stone work and we all enjoy it to this day. In order to respect the quiet of the natural surroundings, only hand tools are allowed in the conservation area.

Since its founding 20 years ago, Broad Brook Coalition has grown into a friendly, work-oriented,



Photo by Joan Hastings

all-volunteer support group for the conservation area. Carmen credits Northampton planning director Wayne Feiden with the commitment and expertise needed to use zoning laws, foreclosure notices, and other legalities for the benefit of the conservation effort in the City. Carmen's enthusiasm and ability to make friends easily led to her being invited to join the BBC Board in the 1980s. She served for 8 years in many capacities, but finally realized her love was of the outdoors, not of meetings in offices, and she now lets others do the management work. Carmen is one of BBC's best sparkplugs! She believes it is a model of a citizen organization working in partnership with a municipality. It has over 200 members and contributors who enjoy being stewards of land and willingly toil to remove invasive species and keep the trails in good shape, all while creating new habitats for wildlife.

Joan Hastings

President's Report

Broad Brook Coalition has had a phenomenally successful 20th anniversary year.

Our Walks and Talks leaders have taken more than two hundred people into Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area to study trees, birds, mushrooms, vernal pools, wildflowers, beavers, and other important elements of the ecosystem.

Our Management Committee has continued to monitor the water quality of Fitzgerald Lake and initiated an educational program discouraging the overuse of fertilizers in the watershed. We have arranged for maintenance mowing of the dam, Cooke's Pasture, and South Pasture, and we have leveled the wildlife blind. We have continued to battle the invasive Water Chestnut, removing canoe-load after canoe-load from the lake, and we have made plans to fight other invasive plants such as *Phragmites*.

Our Land Committee has evaluated several potential additions to the Conservation Area. As we go to press, sensitive negotiations are in progress, and we may have some exciting news to announce at our annual meeting on November 2.

Our Trails Committee has worked tirelessly to remove a record number of fallen trees and to maintain the trails and trail signs.

Two informative newsletters have reported on our activities, and we've maintained an excellent Web site: <http://www.broadbrookcoalition.org/>. A listserv e-

mails announcements of our activities. We've made arrangements with Lilly Library to archive various BBC records such as the log of animal sightings from the Wildlife Blind. And we have re-established connection with the affordable-housing community.

At our 20th Anniversary celebration in September, Tom Wessels delivered a fascinating talk on interpreting the history of New England's landscape, and then while the Koco Quartet provided entertainment, our guests enjoyed delicious food and drink.

We had very successful membership and fund-raising drives which are now approaching our twin goals of a 20% increase in membership and a \$20,000 addition to our land acquisition fund.



Common or Black Elderberry (Sambucus canadensis) observed on BBC's Wildflower Walk, led by Janet Bissell, in May. Photo by Steve Fratoni.

And who do we have to thank for doing all this terrific work? Our volunteers, of course. Many, many thanks to those who pulled Water Chestnut from the lake, organized the newsletter, served on the Board and committees, and contributed in all the ways mentioned above. And most of all many, many thanks to those who have volunteered for BBC in every capacity for the past 20 years. Without your work we never would have had a 20th Anniversary to celebrate.

We hope you will join us for our Annual Meeting on November 2 when Cynthia Boettner will discuss efforts to control invasive plants.

With great excitement BBC looks forward to this event and to many more years of success.

Bob Bissell

Cynthia Boettner to Speak on Invasive Plants at BBC Annual Meeting

Cynthia Boettner, a biologist for the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, will be the featured speaker at the BBC's Annual Meeting to be held on Sunday, November 2, 7:30 PM, at the Gertrude Hubbard Chapel, Hubbard Hall, Clarke School for the Deaf, following a business meeting at 6:30.

Please join us for a stimulating discussion of invasive plants in the Connecticut River Valley and how we can play a part in their control. Cynthia will focus on the invasive plants that are encroaching on our fields and forests, our parks and preserves, and even our own backyards. She will introduce us to a number of common invasive plants in our area, explain the ecological problems they cause and describe the techniques used to control them.

Cynthia's professional activities include collaboration with numerous partnering organizations and agencies to further educational efforts, control projects, and networking among groups concerned with invasive plant issues. As Coordinator of the Connecticut River Watershed Invasive Plant Control Initiative, she leads the effort to keep Water Chestnut in check in our ponds and lakes and is involved in a major effort to control a Pale Swallowwort infestation on Mt. Tom. She also serves as Coordinator of the New England Invasive Plant Group, which provides information to the public about activities related to invasive plants, such as workshops, conferences and volunteer opportunities.

Cynthia earned a Masters of Arts in environmentally oriented landscape design and planning from the Conway School of Landscape Design, and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Michigan in Environmental Studies, with a focus on Biology. Prior to her position with the USFWS, she carried out research in a number of different areas. At the University of Massachusetts, for instance, she coordinated a survey of Purple Loosestrife and studied gypsy moth population dynamics as well as the effects of a parasite released to control gypsy moth on native silk moth species. She has a keen interest in landscaping with native plants that benefit wildlife and spends her free time tending to the flower and vegetable gardens that she and her husband, Jeff Boettner, have planted at their home in Shelburne Falls

Bob Zimmermann

The Biggest Weasel: Life of the Fisher

The Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area (FLCA) has an amazing variety of wildlife because of its many healthy habitats, expanding size, and corridors to other wildlife-rich areas. One of its rarely seen inhabitants is the fisher. However, a number of people hiking in FLCA have seen fisher tracks in the snow, and some lucky hikers have actually seen this beautiful animal.

The fisher was eliminated from Massachusetts in the 19th century because of agricultural land clearing, but made a comeback beginning in the 1960s. With ears that are broad and rounded, the fisher is dark brown or black. It is one of the largest members of the weasel family, with males weighing between eight and sixteen pounds and measuring three feet from head to tail. Females are about half that size.

“Fisher” is a poor choice for a name, since the only fish this animal eats are those that it finds already dead. It is omnivorous, eating primarily squirrels, and is one of the few animals that will prey on porcupines. It uses its speed and long muzzle to attack the porcupine’s face to kill it. The fisher is as agile on the ground as it is in trees. Unfortunately, fishers will prey on domestic cats if given the opportunity.

Fishers breed from February to March and exhibit a reproductive strategy called “delayed implantation” that is common in the weasel family. The female breeds within days of giving birth, but the fertilized eggs remain dormant for the next ten months. If the female is healthy, the fertilized eggs implant in the uterine wall and begin normal development. If she is not healthy, the eggs don’t implant. Maternal dens are typically located in a cavity high in a large tree. The average litter size is three kits. The young remain with their mother until late summer or early fall, at which time they disperse to begin their solitary lives as adults. I hope you are lucky enough to someday see one of these wonderful creatures.

Jim Reis



Notes from the Management Committee

A number of management projects were carried out in the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area over the spring and summer, including invasive plant control, water quality assessment, and maintenance of the wildlife blind. Special thanks are due to Bob Rundquist, Ed Olander, Downey Meyer, and board member Jim Reis, who found a brief window of calm during which to level the blind as hurricane Hanna swept through earlier this month.

In May, we were pleased to learn that the BBC's grant application to the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA) had been approved. The award of \$3,500 will be used for periodic mowing of Cooke's Pasture over the next few years, as well as for the control of several patches of the invasive common reed, *Phragmites*, in the adjacent marsh. We are indebted to the NRCS for this grant, which will help us to maintain the pasture as early successional habitat and to combat the further spread of an invasive plant that can cause significant damage to wetland ecology.

Ongoing efforts to control the proliferation of invasive plants in FLCA were the focus of a number of work days this summer. The first objective, in June, was to hand-cut a small stand of Autumn Olive and a much wider infestation of Glossy Buckthorn in Cooke's Pasture. Although this procedure undoubtedly reduced the dispersal of seeds from the targeted plants, we came to realize that a much more concerted effort will be needed to implement effective control of these two invasive shrubs. More promising results were achieved in the removal of Water Chestnut from Fitzgerald Lake. In the third year of an intensive campaign to thwart the spread of Water Chestnut, BBC Board member Bruce Hart led a flotilla of kayaks and canoes onto the lake on three occasions in July and August to hand-pull this persistent aquatic invasive. Although the infestation has been substantially curtailed, continued surveillance will be required to ensure that it remains under control in coming years.

We have continued to monitor the water quality in Broad Brook, Fitzgerald Lake, and the marsh below the dam on a quarterly basis. The pH, alkalinity, and levels of dissolved oxygen, nitrates, and phosphates in the lake and the marsh have been normal and signal a generally healthy aquatic environment. However, we continued to notice an elevated level of nitrates in Broad Brook to the west of FLCA. Closer inspection



Doug McDonald, Northampton DPW, shows the crew of middle-schoolers where the water in their neighborhood goes. Photo by Andrew Grimaldi.

revealed high nitrate levels in some of Broad Brook's tributaries that drain the Spring Grove Cemetery, JFK Middle School, and adjacent residential areas. According to Doug McDonald of the Northampton DPW, nitrates can come from any one of a number of sources, including fertilizer runoff, springs, groundwater flows, and leaky septic systems. Further testing will be needed to pin down the source (or sources) of the excess nitrate. In the meantime, Doug has been working with the staff at Spring Grove to limit fertilizer use and check the integrity of their drain system. In May, Doug, together with BBC Board member Andrew Grimaldi and a group of middle-schoolers from the neighboring community, also placed cautionary labels on the storm drains that connect to Broad Brook under North Farms Road, alerting passers-by to the fact that what goes into the drains ultimately comes out in Fitzgerald Lake.

Bob Zimmermann

WORK DAY

Saturday, October 11

Meet at Moose Lodge parking lot at 9:00 AM.

Bring lopping shears and bow saws.

Purpose: to clear the path from the dam to South Pasture to permit mowing of the pasture.

**If you can help,
please call Bob Zimmermann at 585-0405.**

Leveling the Wildlife Blind

Building on a marsh is problematic. Thus, the wildlife blind, built in 2000 on the edge of the marsh below Fitzgerald Lake, was leaning dramatically toward the marsh, about nine inches at the top. It definitely got our attention.

On September 6, four brave volunteers successfully jacked up the low side and inserted shims under the posts. The brains of the outfit was Ed Olander, Florence contractor, who had volunteered to honcho the original construction eight years ago. Assistant levelers were Downey Meyer, Jim Reis, and Bob Rundquist. Bob was active in planning the blind originally, with Bob Packard and others.

The floor of the blind is about seven feet above the marsh, which allows a good view of birds, moose, beaver, otter, and a beautiful swamp panorama. It's located off the Marian Street Trail, near Boggy Meadow Road. Each of the blind's



The wildlife blind was tilting dramatically ... well, not quite this dramatically. The camera was tilting, too. Photo by Bob Rundquist.



Downey Meyer and Bob Rundquist working to level the blind. Photo by Jim Reis.

four oak legs rests on a concrete pier that tapers out to 28 inches in diameter, three to four feet underground. Each was formed by pouring concrete into a tapered "Big-Foot" plastic form, which stayed in the ground. Conventional Sonotube-formed concrete was poured on top of that.

The incredible effort of digging out the muck, mixing and pouring concrete, and, incidentally, building the entire blind was accomplished by a six-member Americorps team of young people in one week. They were expertly mentored by Ed Olander. The prior weekend, eighteen pack mules (a.k.a. BBC volunteers) carried in about 6,000 pounds of materials on the quarter-mile trail from Boggy Meadow Road.

Come and enjoy the now-level blind! Read entries in the journal kept there, and add your own. Hint: When arriving, walk quietly to sneak up on the critters. And those chickadees may eat sunflower seed out of your hand. (Thanks, Moose Patrol.)
Bob Rundquist

BBC Collection Available at Lilly Library

Last year, BBC deposited a collection of materials relating to the history of the organization at the Lilly Library in Florence, including Management Plans for the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area dating back to 1996 and a complete set of notebooks detailing wildlife observations at the wildlife blind on the marsh since its construction in 2000. These notebooks are of particular interest as they comprise a spontaneous and delightful record of the animals and birds that enrich a visit to the conservation area at any time of year.

The library staff has almost finished cataloguing the collection and most of the items can now be accessed in the Local History Room on the Lilly's second floor. To view the catalog entries via the internet, go to the Lilly Library home page (<http://lillylibrary.org/>), click on catalog, type "Broad Brook Coalition" in the keyword box and submit. Each item in the BBC collection is bar-coded and denoted by the identifier "LH" preceding the name of the entry. Photo albums that document the building of the canoe launch boardwalk, the reconstruction of the Fitzgerald Lake dam, the erection of the wildlife blind and many other high points in the history of the FLCA are being prepared for addition to the collection soon.

Bob Zimmermann



On May 25, Janet Bissell led a Walk and Talk on wildflowers at FLCA. Janet explained how to identify wildflowers as well as pointing out both native and non-native species. Photo by Steve Fratoni.

Walks and Talks: Exploring the Eastern Forest with Bob Leverett

Saturday, October 18, 2008

10:00 AM – 12:00 or 1:00 PM

Meet at Moose Lodge entrance
at the top of Cooke Avenue (off Hatfield Street)

Cosponsored by BBC and **River Valley Market**

Bob Leverett will guide us through the forest at Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area, paying particular attention to successional growth and the forest's development up to this point. We will learn about aging a forest by its physical characteristics, observe and identify non-charismatic species, and learn more about tree identification through bark and form.

Bob will also discuss his co-founding of the Eastern Native Tree Society, and locally, the Friends of Mohawk Trail State Forest.

Bob is the author of *The Sierra Club Guide to the Ancient Forests of the Northeast*, and has co-authored works on old-growth forest in the eastern United States. A helpful Web site to prepare for this presentation is www.nativetreesociety.org.

More Walks and Talks

may be scheduled after this newsletter goes to press. To find out about them you can

- Keep an eye on the listings in local newspapers, especially *Hampshire Life*
- Visit the BBC Web site:

www.broadbrookcoalition.org

- Sign up for BBC e-mail alerts: go to the BBC Web site, click on "Events," and then "Join the Listserve."

Notes from the Land Committee

BBC has helped the City add a small but important parcel to FLCA this year. This 3.9-acre acquisition was part of a complicated transaction that will move several building lots on which back taxes had accumulated either back to the tax rolls or into FLCA. Some of the land will be reconfigured into new, more environmentally appropriate building lots, and the rest will be preserved. The conservation land, located off Morningside Drive (across from the North Farms Road entrance) will not only help protect and buffer Broad Brook, which flows through it, but will also provide a potential link between FLCA and other open land owned by Spring Grove Cemetery and the JFK Middle School. BBC has pledged up to \$5,000 toward the “soft costs” of the acquisition (including surveying for the reconfiguration). Much of the funding for the purchase will come from the Community Preservation Act, and much of that will be rolled back into City coffers when the back taxes are paid off. Your contributions to BBC’s Land Acquisition Fund helped BBC give the City the flexibility to make this project possible.

We hope to have more land acquisition news for you soon. The economy has changed the advantages and disadvantages of keeping or selling land for many owners. But while the economic downturn may bring us more interested sellers, it may also make it more challenging to raise funds. But we’re not discouraged! Our 20th Anniversary campaign was a great success, bringing in \$8,115, and members contributed another \$4,207 along with their membership renewals in 2007–2008. In addition, we now have the opportunity to apply for CPA funds; there are still federal, state, and private grant funds available; and there are new federal and state tax policies to make preservation more attractive to landowners.

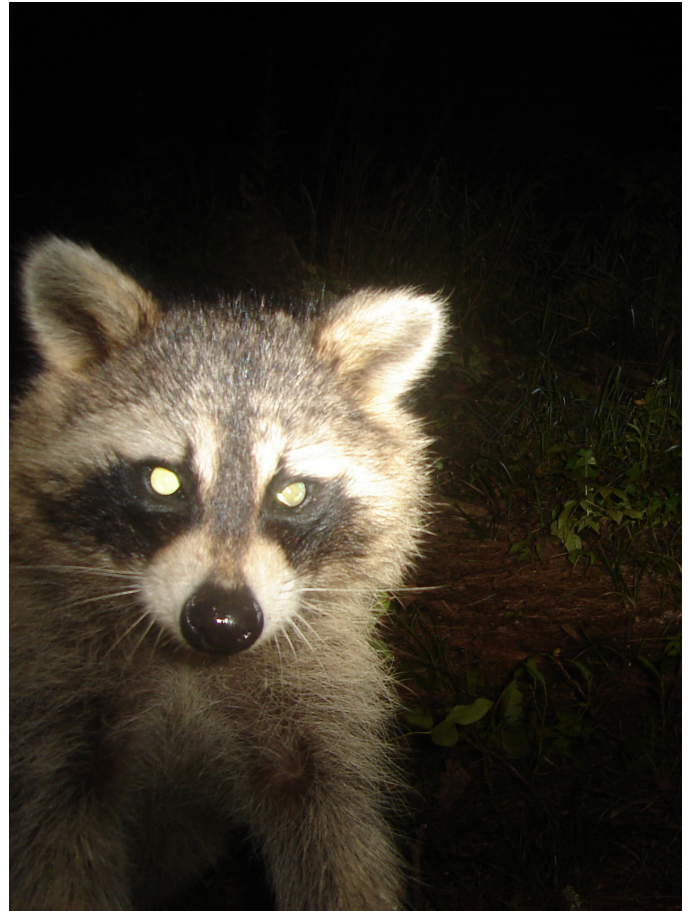
Thanks so much for all your support—it’s great to know we can count on you! *Norma Sims Roche*

Remember that hunting is permitted
in certain parts of
Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area
(see map brochure for details).
Please exercise caution at all times.

Thanks to our 2008 Walk and Talk leaders:

Heather Ruel
John Body
Mike Wojtech
Molly Hale
Timothy Brown

Charles Quinlin
Janet Bissell
Gini Traub
Pat McDonagh
Bob Leverett



Smile, you're on Candid Camera! This raccoon stopped to check out the automatic camera operated by John Body for the Northampton Wildlife Committee.

Broad Brook Coalition Board of Directors 2007–2008

Robert Bissell, President
Robert A. Zimmermann, Vice-President
Norma Sims Roche, Secretary
Alan Marvelli, Treasurer
Andrew Grimaldi
Bruce Hart
Frank Olbris
Lou Peugh
James Reis

HELP WANTED: Volunteer Opportunities

Be a part of our 21st year!

A number of our longtime volunteers are finishing their terms this year, and the Nominating Committee will be looking for people to serve as replacements.

Board Members. At least two people are needed to stand for election at the Annual Meeting. The Board meets once a month, but members are also involved in subcommittees and many other aspects of running our all-volunteer organization. There are nine Board members to split the work. We especially need people with administrative and communication skills and people who might be willing to serve as officers eventually.

Management Committee. Our busiest subcommittee plans and sets priorities for the care of FLCA in consultation with the Northampton Conservation Commission. It organizes work days and handles other maintenance tasks. The work involves both meetings indoors and outdoor work in FLCA. Interest in wildlife habitat management is a plus.

Land Preservation/Acquisition Committee. The Land Committee approaches and keeps in touch with owners of land near FLCA, provides information and assistance to those who might be interested in preservation, and organizes workshops and other educational opportunities for landowners and the public. It usually meets quarterly, but may be busier when a transaction is under way. Good communication skills, discretion, and interest in land preservation strategies are the skills needed.

Volunteer Coordinator: This position would involve periodically telephoning BBC members who have expressed an interest in volunteering at FLCA to sign them up for specific work days. We all want to help, but often we don't get out there unless someone gives us a call. Will you be that someone?

Apprentice Newsletter Editor. Work with the Newsletter Editor to solicit material and produce the BBC Newsletter, and eventually take over the job. Basic computer skills helpful but not essential. Help keep BBC's main contact with its members vital.

If you're interested in any of these positions, please get in touch with any member of BBC's Nominating Committee:

Bob Bissell: robertbissell@yahoo.com, 586-5488

Norma Roche: nroche@crocker.com, 586-4364

Alan Marvelli: amarvelli@smith.edu, 586-3756



Installing stickers on storm drains near Fitzgerald Lake. You, too, can give us a hand! Photo by Andrew Grimaldi.

Directions to Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area Entrances and Trailheads

North Farms Road Entrance:

From the center of Florence (Route 9) traveling west, turn right onto North Maple Street at the traffic light. Proceed north 1.1 miles (North Maple Street will turn into North Farms Road). The FLCA parking lot and entrance kiosk will be on your right.

Moose Lodge Entrance:

From Routes 5 and 10 (King Street) traveling north, turn left onto Bridge Road at a set of traffic lights. At the next set of lights, take a right onto Cooke Avenue. Take Cooke Avenue to its end and you will be in the Moose Lodge parking area. Please park on the right as this is actually a private lot generously shared with FLCA users by the owners of the Moose Lodge.

Please Join Us!

If you're not already a member, please complete this form and return it with \$25.00 to

BROAD BROOK COALITION, P.O. Box 60566, Florence, MA 01062

(All contributions to Broad Brook Coalition are **tax deductible.**)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

_____ Additional contribution to the Land Acquisition Fund: \$ _____

(All contributions to Broad Brook Coalition are **tax deductible.**)

___ Please do *not* include my name in any listing of contributors to Broad Brook Coalition.

Broad Brook Coalition Needs Your Help, Too!

We appreciate your membership dues, but we can also use your volunteer time. Members and friends are needed to help carry out our goals. Please consider one (or more) of the following volunteer opportunities:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| ___ Trail maintenance and repair | ___ Fundraising campaigns |
| ___ Invasive species removal | ___ Management Committee (manages conservation area) |
| ___ Clerical help/Mailings | ___ Land Preservation/Acquisition Committee |
| ___ Computer help | ___ BBC Board of Directors |
| ___ Writer/reporter for newsletter | ___ Educational/recreational program planning or leadership, |
| ___ Newsletter editor | ___ Walks and Talks |

BBC Events Calendar: Fall 2008

Saturday, October 11, 9:00 AM

WORK DAY to clear path for mowing of South Pasture

Meet at Moose Lodge entrance

Saturday, October 18, 2008, 10:00 AM

WALKS AND TALKS: Exploring the Eastern Forest

Bob Leverett

Meet at Moose Lodge entrance

Sunday, November 2, 6:30 PM:

BROAD BROOK COALITION ANNUAL MEETING

Gertrude Hubbard Chapel, Hubbard Hall, Clarke School for the Deaf,

6:30 PM: Conversation and Refreshments

6:45 PM: Business Meeting

7:30 PM: **Invasive Plants: Why We Worry and What We Can Do: Cynthia Boettner**

See details throughout this newsletter



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BROAD BROOK COALITION ANNUAL MEETING

DATE: Sunday, November 2, 2008

**PLACE: Gertrude Hubbard Chapel, Hubbard Hall, Clarke School for the Deaf,
47 Round Hill Road, Northampton**

(From Elm Street, take Round Hill Road to the top of the hill and look for the flagpole at Hubbard Hall on your right. Go in the front entrance and walk to the Chapel at the back of the building.)

6:30 PM: Conversation and Refreshments

6:45 PM: Business Meeting, Elections to Board of Directors,
Presentation of Annual Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service

7:30 PM: Special Presentation:

Invasive Plants: Why We Worry and What We Can Do

Cynthia Boettner

Coordinator, Connecticut River Watershed Invasive Plant Control Initiative,
Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge

Invasive plants have been an ongoing problem at the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area. Throughout our region, they are encroaching on our fields and forests, our parks and preserves, and even our own backyards. Cynthia Boettner will introduce us to the common invasive plants in our area, explain the ecological problems they can cause, and describe techniques used to control them.

