



P.O. Box 60566, Florence, MA 01062

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

Beginning Animal Tracking

We are so blessed to have so many different animals to track in the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area—fox, coyote, bobcat, moose, bear, deer, fisher, porcupine, raccoon, and otter, just to name a few. A few years ago I got interested in animal tracking and discovered it is easier than I first thought. Here is some of what I have learned.

(1) **Buy a tracking book and tape measure.** A good book will show you all the track shapes and sizes, stride lengths, patterns, scat size and shape, etc. I think the best one is *Tracking & The Art of Seeing* by Paul Rezendez, who lives near the Quabbin. The book has great pictures and all the detailed information you'll need. Then, if your memory is like mine, make a one-page "cheat sheet" with the basic info on some of the animals to carry with you.

(2) **Don't jump to conclusions,** look at **all the clues** first—track size, shape, pattern, stride length, type of habitat—before guessing. Many times the tracks are not distinct, so just looking for the track shape often won't help you.

Fisher trail at Mineral Hills Conservation Area. Photo by John Body.



Turkey track. Photo by John Body.

(3) **Go off-trail** to see more tracks, and get away from dog tracks, although you can easily distinguish them because dogs rarely "perfect-step" (hind foot lands perfectly into front foot track) like most wild animals.

(4) **Follow the trail for a while,** and notice **all the clues.** For example, fox and coyote tracks have 4 toes with claws and are oval, a bobcat track is round and has 4 toes that don't show its claws; a fisher has 5 pointed toes and is round; otter trails show tail dragging, and frequent sliding; the average stride of a fox is around 16" while that of a coyote is around 24"; fox urine on stumps has a skunklike odor.

(5) **Notice the small stuff,** and bring your glasses if you need them. For example, there is a unique small indentation at the top of the heel pad of a bobcat; the heel pad of a fox is less distinct than a coyote's because it is very hairy.

(6) **Take a tracking class.** I recommend a workshop in the Quabbin by Valerie and Nick Wisniewski <walnuthilltracking.com>. The Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area is a great place to see all kinds of tracks. Enjoy!!!!

Jim Reis

President's Message

It could be argued that the most important function of Broad Brook Coalition is land preservation. Once land has been developed, there is no second chance at preservation. We can postpone decisions about rebuilding the wildlife blind, altering the course of the Hillside Trail, or constructing another bog bridge. We can study lake dredging for 5 or 10 years before making a decision. And, while there is some urgency in the effort to battle invasive species, if we miss a plant or two, we'll have another chance next week and next month. But, once land is developed, it's gone forever. That's why we are thrilled every time we can announce that we've added another block of acreage to the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area. In this newsletter, we announce the pending acquisition of the Private William Adams Memorial Parcel. This addition, a combined effort of the VFW (Michael F. Curtin Post 8006), the City of Northampton, and BBC, will add 17 acres to our conservation area.

I also draw your attention to the article in this issue concerning land preservation on Turkey Hill Road. While this area is at some distance from FLCA, the preservation of this land would strengthen wildlife corridors and species preservation, and would therefore benefit the entire City, including FLCA.

Of course, BBC is not ignoring the trails, or the lake, or the dam, or invasive species. We are fortunate to have a sufficient number of volunteers to focus on land preservation and on each of these other issues. Furthermore, it is a pleasure to note that our volunteers do not really leave—they simply recycle! Bob Packard, Brian Adams, and Peter Searl have left the BBC Board after a combined total of 19 years of board service. Yet they have not left BBC. They continue to contribute by leading walks, formulating management plans, and organizing work days. Meanwhile, we welcome three new Board members: Melody Foti, Bruce Hart, and Jim Reis, each of whom has previously volunteered on many BBC efforts.

Our volunteers sustain us. There are so many opportunities: from helping to maintain trails to working on this newsletter, from battling invasive species to serving on the Trails subcommittee, from planting native shrubs to developing a BBC Web site.

Many volunteer opportunities are listed in this newsletter. We hope you will join us. Volunteer with us, your friends and neighbors, like-minded people seeking to preserve land—for the benefit of our children and grandchildren.

Robert Bissell

GMRC Disbands, Leaves Legacy of Cooperation

On February 6, 2006, the Greater Mill River Coalition voted to disband and donate the balance of its treasury (approximately \$700.00) to the Franklin Land Trust.

GMRC was a volunteer group consisting of representatives of municipal governments and conservation groups from Northampton, Hatfield, Williamsburg, Whately, and Conway. Its mission was to coordinate and advocate for conservation and community preservation activities in the large, unfragmented forested area spanning the five towns. Norma Roche and Bob Bissell served successively as representatives from Broad Brook Coalition.

Over its 6 years of existence, GMRC articulated an important vision of regional land conservation and inter-town cooperation. Its most concrete accomplishment was the creation of a comprehensive database that pulled together parcel information for the five towns and GIS data on natural resources. This database is now in the hands the five town governments for use as a conservation planning tool.

Unfortunately, it became increasingly evident that GMRC was competing with its own constituent local organizations for the limited number of volunteers who are committed to working actively on conservation, and their local projects had to take priority. But its members' work together is certainly not at an end. GMRC leaves a network of committed people throughout the five towns and a legacy of inter-town planning and cooperation that can serve as a model for the future.

The members of GMRC thank all of you who have helped us make its accomplishments possible over the past 6 years.

Michael Coffey (GMRC Chair, Hatfield)

Join the BBC List Serv!

BBC members and friends can receive notices about Walks and Talks, work days, special events, and conservation issues via the BBC list serv. This method of communication can vastly improve our ability to communicate and save postage, paper, and volunteer time. If you'd like to subscribe, send an empty e-mail to

broad_brook_coalition-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Thanks to Julia Chevan for maintaining the list serv!

Bill Schafer's Challenge Met, Funds Tapped for New Parcel

Broad Brook Coalition has met Bill Schafer's challenge by raising \$11,610.00 for the Land Acquisition Fund. The funds came from 115 BBC members and friends, supplemented by a gift of \$250 from Florence Savings Bank. As agreed, Bill's estate matched our efforts with another \$10,000. All of the funds will be used for land acquisition for the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area.

Bill Schafer, a BBC Board member and avid volunteer at FLCA who died in December 2004, left this bequest as a challenge to encourage BBC to generate community support—and the community (that's you) has really come through! We thank the Schafer family, all of the donors, and, of course, Bill, for making this possible.

New Parcel to be Purchased from VFW

The Land Acquisition Fund, newly replenished by the Bill Schafer Challenge, has already been tapped for the purchase of 17 acres for the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area from the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Michael E. Curtin Post 8006, Florence. The City Council voted to approve the purchase on March 16, 2006. BBC has contributed \$8,500, the full purchase price of the parcel. The City will cover the "soft costs" (appraisal, survey, legal expenses, etc.). The land, originally left to the VFW for recreational purposes, will be known as the Private William Adams Memorial Parcel. Once the purchase has been completed, the parcel, like all of FLCA, will be owned by the City and managed by BBC in partnership with the Conservation Commission.

Full Funding Supports Turkey Hill Road Plan

In the past, BBC has contributed only a portion of the cost of any FLCA land purchase, working in partnership with the City to cover the costs. The BBC Board of Directors took the unusual step of voting to cover the full purchase price of the VFW parcel in order to free the City to concentrate its financial resources on the unique opportunity offered by the Turkey Hill Road project (see accompanying story).

Help Is Still Needed

The Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area now stands at 600 acres, but it is surrounded by still more forests and wetlands that can provide valuable wildlife habitat and watershed if they are permanently protected. The Land Preservation/Acquisition Committee continues to keep in touch with landowners near FLCA

who might be interested in selling or placing conservation restrictions on such lands. We never know when such an opportunity will present itself, or what its scope will be, so we welcome your contributions to the Land Acquisition Fund at any time. You can use the membership form in this newsletter to make your gift.

Norma Roche

151 Acres At Stake on Turkey Hill Road

Funds are being raised for the largest and most significant purchase of conservation land in Northampton since Cooke's Pasture: 151 acres at the end of Turkey Hill Road. The land, located in the western part of the City, only a quarter mile from the existing Mineral Hills conservation area, includes a hilltop and provides spectacular views.

A purchase-and-sale agreement has been negotiated with the owner. The City Council has approved the expenditure of \$70,000 from City funds, but **\$96,000 more must still be raised privately by May 1**. Neighbors of the property on Turkey Hill Road are spearheading that effort. If the funds are not raised, 37 homes could be built on the hilltop property.

Contributions can be sent to the Northampton Office of Planning and Development, 210 Main Street, Room 11, Northampton, MA 01060. Please make checks payable to the City of Northampton, and write "Turkey Hill Land Purchase" in the memo space. More information, and a pledge form, are available at the Office of Planning and Development Web site: <http://www.northamptonma.gov/opd/turkey/>. All contributions for this purpose are tax-deductible.



The spectacular views from the proposed conservation area, the only such views in Northampton, extend for 30 miles. Photo by Mark Carmien.

Notes from the Management Committee

At meetings in February and March, the BBC Management Committee discussed the implementation of goals established in the 5-year Management Plan for the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area that was recently prepared by the BBC Board of Directors in cooperation with the Northampton Conservation Commission.

The presence of invasive plants in the FLCA remains a major concern. To keep up to date on these issues, committee members will participate in two April workshops organized by the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge at its Great Falls Discovery Center in Turners Falls, one on "Planning Invasive Plant Control on Large Parcels" and the other on "Japanese Knotweed Control." Other approaches to invasive plant control discussed at the meetings included inviting a consultant to visit FLCA for a first-hand evaluation of our problems and the use of a professional herbicide applicator to curtail the spread of difficult-to-control species such as *Phragmites*. To aid in these evaluations, the Management Committee will prepare a detailed map of invasive plants, including aquatic species, within the FLCA this spring with an eye to continuing the survey on an annual basis to monitor the success of our control efforts. And, of course, we will continue to pursue the traditional approach of hand removal. A work day scheduled for **Saturday, April 22**, will focus on small infestations of swallow-wort, garlic mustard, and lesser celandine along the path from North Farms Road to the canoe launch, and multiflora rose at the Fishing Place.

Invasive Species Work Day Saturday, April 22, 9:00 AMnoonish

Come and help us out as we continue to work to rid the FLCA of invasive plant species. We'll be meeting at the North Farms Road entrance and heading out to tackle those nasty plant invaders wherever we find them. Bring snacks and water, gloves, and a shovel, clippers, and any other tool that you have that might help us dig up those invasives that are working overtime to transform FLCA into a less biologically rich area. We'll be removing Norway maple, Japanese knotweed, swallow-wort, lesser celandine, garlic mustard, and of course everyone's favorite, multiflora rose. Hope to see you there!

Brian Adams

Shrub Island Planting

Saturday, May 6, 9:00 AM–12:00 noon
(Meet at 9:00 AM at the Fitzgerald Lake dam)

We would welcome the help of all those interested in wielding a shovel for a few hours to launch our second cluster of native shrubs.

The Management Committee has received special permission to use an **all-terrain vehicle** to transport the plants for the shrub island into Cooke's Pasture. We're seeking a member or friend who has an ATV that we could use for the day. Here's your one chance to go four-wheeling—legally—in FLCA! If you can help, please contact Bob Zimmermann (585-0405, zimmermann@biochem.umass.edu).

Our two open areas, Cooke's Pasture and South Pasture, will be maintained as shrubland in the future. Our first "shrub island" was established in the moist southwestern corner of Cooke's Pasture, where a variety of hardy native shrubs suitable for providing food and shelter to birds and other wildlife were planted by an enthusiastic team of volunteers in early May of last year. Going into winter, the new shrubs appeared to be doing well. This year we will create a second shrub island on higher, dryer ground. While this spring's effort will be financed by BBC's general fund and a generous gift from an anonymous donor, we intend to apply for a grant to fund further shrub island plantings in the years to come. In the meantime, the remaining portions of Cooke's Pasture will be mowed on a 3-year cycle, while the area around the dam will be mowed annually or semiannually to prevent the infiltration of roots into the earthen berm that forms the dam's face. In recent years, South Pasture has become overgrown with woody shrubs. Their removal will be the focus of a special work day later this year as a prerequisite to mowing and the eventual planting of shrub islands in that area as well.

The Management Committee will also continue to oversee routine activities such as maintenance of the bird and bat houses in Cooke's Pasture and inspection of the beaver mitigation devices. Still on the agenda for discussion are plans for testing water quality in Fitzgerald Lake, the adjacent marshes, and the vernal pools, more clearly demarcating the portions of the FLCA where seasonal hunting is permitted, and plans for an inventory of plant and wildlife species in the FLCA.

Bob Zimmermann

Focus: Bruce Young, Land Use and Conservation Planner

Bruce Young, Land Use and Conservation Planner for the City of Northampton, has been in his current role for about a year. Bruce spoke with BBC member Lou Peugh in his Northampton office recently.

What attracted you to the field of land use and conservation?

My first day in the Navy out on a ship I was asked to take out the trash. When I asked, "Where do I put it?" I was told to dump it over the side. I said, "No way! That's not happening!"

Bruce started reading about the environment and educating himself on how to protect it.

What do you see as Northampton's biggest challenge in the short run?

Probably the biggest challenge is keeping development in the developed areas and keeping large open tracts rural, in line with smart growth principles. Northampton is in the process of developing a comprehensive sustainability plan—finding out what people in Northampton want and working with smart growth concepts.

And in the long run?

It's the same challenge plus some others: managing storm water from development and maintaining areas for biodiversity. Most of the new development going in has changed the hydrological character of the land. Areas that once held water and acted as sinks now push water to other areas. As the water travels, it picks up sediment and dust and deposits it in streams and lakes, filling in the substrates, or nooks and crannies. The water also picks up nutrients causing a hastening in the eutrophication (filling in) process in lakes, causing the loss of fisheries, and wildlife that depend on fisheries. Plus, we're creating more flood problems for neighboring land.

What have been some of your most rewarding experiences in this field?

Being able to work with someone on a well-designed project, seeing it come to life. Assessing the landscape, finding the best place for protection. It also has to do with hydrological characteristics. The use of solar, light and wind power, that's very exciting! Working with volunteers at BBC on a wetlands enhancement project, we had something to look at in the end, something to be proud of. Also land preservation—knowing that a certain piece of land will be protected forever and people can use it for generations to come.

Where did you go to school?

I went to UMass-Amherst as an undergraduate, with a couple of semesters at Oregon State, studying Environmental Science and Natural Resources. I got my Masters also at UMass in Environmental Regional Planning with a specialization in water management.

Bruce also lived in Africa while serving in the Peace Corps. He worked on sustainable forestry and agriculture.

"The nice part was the villages were small and very communal. The whole village raised the children."

He likes living in Western Mass. for similar reasons. Currently, he and his wife are building a home in Montague, where he grew up.

What do you do for fun?

Rock climbing, mountaineering, cat watching (bobcats, that is). I spend a lot of time outdoors observing wildlife.

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Bruce Hart: Outstanding Volunteer

At its annual meeting in November 2005, Broad Brook Coalition presented its Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service to Bruce Hart.

It would be hard to list all the ways in which Bruce has helped BBC over the years. He may be best known to many members as the organizer of the Walks and Talks programs. It's Bruce who finds interesting walk leaders, arranges and publicizes the programs, often greets attendees personally, and copes when, occasionally, something doesn't go according to the plan. His other contributions, just to name a few, include help with plantings and invasive species removal, organizing a scuba team to clear the dam outlet (after spending time in cold water with volunteers attempting to do it themselves), talking with Northampton High School's Environmental Club and Elder Vision about volunteer work at FLCA, repairing and keeping an eye on the bluebird houses in Cooke's Pasture, arranging for Smith Voke to build, and installing, our new "Iron Ranger" donation boxes, and organizing a walk for City leaders and candidates. Bruce is a tireless advocate for BBC, and contributes lots of ideas for carrying out its mission better and more efficiently. Last but not least, at the same Annual Meeting where he was honored, he was elected to serve on the BBC Board. Thanks, Bruce—it's people like you who make this organization what it is.



*Bruce Hart at work in Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area.
Photo by David Hershops.*

Bill Schafer Challenge Member/Donor Appreciation Day Sunday, April 23, 2006

Refreshments 1:00–3:00 PM
31 Marian Street, Northampton
(Board Member Melody Foti's home)

Walk to the Wildlife Blind 3:00 PM
(This will be a short walk, though not all of the terrain will be smooth.)

Come meet the Board, learn more about the projects and acquisitions you're supporting, see more of the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area, and enjoy good conversation and refreshments with other BBC members and contributors.

If you're not a BBC member or donor, come anyway and find out what BBC is all about!

Iron Rangers In Place

Broad Brook Coalition has installed two "Iron Rangers," donation boxes mounted on metal pipes, at the North Farms Road and Boggy Meadow Road trailheads. The Iron Rangers will provide a safe, secure way for visitors to the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area to make a contribution to BBC's Land Acquisition Fund.

Thanks to all who helped with this project:

- Mark Neal and Foster Farrar Co. True Value Hardware on King Street in Northampton. Mark took part of his weekend to scout our iron rangers and offer suggestions for their improvement.
- Jeff Gougeon, Texaco Service Station in Florence, spent time attempting to create a viable design for the iron rangers.
- Ultimately, we accepted a design by the Smith Vocational High School's Tech Department. Thanks again to Jeff Lareau, Randy Duso, and the students who helped bring this project to completion.
- Chuck Hommes, forever on recycling and reuse detail, shared his assortment of work gloves.

Bruce Hart

BBC Board Member Honored by UMass

Robert A. Zimmermann, BBC board member for the past 5 years and current vice-president, has been honored by the University of Massachusetts. Bob, Professor of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, was selected to deliver a lecture on February 22, one of the Distinguished Faculty Lecture Series at the University. Following the lecture, he was given the Chancellor's Medal, "the highest honor bestowed on individuals for exemplary and extraordinary service to the campus."

Bob's lecture, titled "A Molecular Biologist Returns to Nature," was attended by more than a hundred people. His research of the past 30 years has involved the structure and function of ribosomes, the cellular structures responsible for protein synthesis. He emphasized a remarkable aspect of these particles: a number of functionally important parts of the ribosomal RNA molecule are virtually identical in nearly every species, despite 3 billion years of evolutionary radiation. He used this fact to illustrate the interrelationships of all species. He asked what might threaten this interconnection, a query that led to his concise review of current environmental issues: urban sprawl, habitat fragmentation, wetlands destruction, waste disposal, invasive species proliferation, extinction, global warming, and food supply exhaustion.

In view of potential environmental catastrophe, he asked what the individual can do. Humans are, he said, the stewards of biodiversity. Individuals can take action to protect and preserve the environment. We can elect sympathetic legislators and contribute to environmental organizations. We can become "Citizen Scientists," a term Bob used to define those people willing to learn about environmental issues, teach others what they have learned, work to restore threatened areas, participate in species surveys, combat invasive species, take steps to help species survive, write legislators, and conserve land. He emphasized that the only requirement to become a Citizen Scientist is a willingness to help. No experience is necessary; one can learn while helping.

It is pleasing to note that BBC currently incorporates most of Bob's recommendations for action. His lecture included many fine illustrative slides—one was a picture of a BBC invasive species work day! Another showed Bob aboard a National Fisheries trawler helping to monitor fish populations off the New England coast. BBC members will be pleased to know that a CD of the lecture will soon be available.

Trail Work Day Saturday, May 13, 9:00 AM–Noon Meet at North Farms Road entrance

Everyone is welcome! We'll supply tools or you can bring your own (shovels, hoes, clippers, rakes, picks, and work gloves). And bring energy and enthusiasm. Our work days are low key, fun, and provide an opportunity to meet others with similar outdoor interests. For more information, please get in touch with Dave Hershops (584-0180, dhershops@verizon.net).

The FLCA trails are generally in good shape, and our work will help keep them that way. If you notice anything amiss out on the trails such as newly fallen trees that needs to be dealt with before the work day, please let Dave know.

Dave Hershops, Trails Chair

Bob has been an active member of the BBC Management Committee. He helped to organize the planting of native shrubs in Cooke's Pasture last year. He has been instrumental in producing the BBC colored map/brochure, available at each FLCA entrance. He has served as the BBC representative on the City's Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee.

Bob was an Associate Professor of Microbiology in 1973–1974 and then an Associate Professor of Biochemistry from 1974 to 1977. He has been a professor in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology since 1977, serving as department head from 1979 to 1986. He earned his bachelor's degree in physics from Amherst College in 1959 and his doctorate in biophysics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1964.

Bob Bissell

The Northampton Office of Planning and Development has kindly agreed to post the BBC newsletter on its Web site. **To see the newsletter in color**, go to <http://www.northamptonma.gov/opd> and click on "Environment and Conservation."

BBC is hoping to create its own Web site soon. If you have computer skills and would like to help, please get in touch with Norma Roche (586-4364, nroche@crocker.com).

Dogs at FLCA: Why Leash? Why Scoop?

The following article was written by Jody Larson and appeared in BBC's Spring 2000 newsletter. Since so little has changed, it has been updated and adapted, with Jody's permission, to remind us all why these issues are so important.

Many BBC members and Fitzgerald Lake neighbors are dog owners who appreciate being able to take their dogs for a walk in the woods. Unfortunately, some dog owners who visit the conservation area are not following the rules of dog etiquette. You may have noticed the signs stating that, by City law, dogs must be on a leash, and that owners must remove dog droppings from trails. We are serious about these rules, and here are the reasons.

The Problem with Droppings

It may seem silly to have to “pick up” after your dog in the woods. After all, countless thousands of birds and other animals live there, and no one picks up after them. But consider what happens when many dogs use one narrow area, such as a trail and the area surrounding it, for their bathroom every day. The paved handicapped access walkway from North Farms Road is a prime example of how unpleasant it can be when droppings are just left where the dog dropped them. BBC continues to hear complaints that this walkway is a poopy mess, especially when the snow melts in the spring. In addition, any kind of animal excrement can become a pollution problem if concentrated in a small area, especially near wetlands.

With funds from your membership dues, BBC provides “Mutt Mitts,” plastic bags for owners to use to scoop up their dog’s droppings, at the trailheads. We can’t provide trash receptacles, so you’ll have to take the bags home with you, but they are suitable for trash disposal in landfills. The bags are biodegradable.

Why Dogs Must Be Leashed

Many dog owners apparently believe that part of being out in nature is to allow their dogs to run loose and “be free.” But let’s consider the nature of dogs.

First of all, dogs are predators and carnivores. Dogs off leash disturb, injure, and kill small animals and ground- or shrub-nesting birds; they may injure nesting parents and eat eggs and nestlings. In April 2002, naturalist Bob Packard found an eastern box turtle (a state-listed Species of Special Concern) near the North Farms Road walkway with a very large old gouge on the upper shell (carapace), “very likely from

a dog. I'm surprised it survived.” There are other predators at FLCA, of course, but again, it’s a matter of numbers. Many dogs every day can make a big difference! Keep in mind that *any* dog is capable of killing and disturbing wildlife when given the opportunity. Their behavior in a wild setting is not predictable.

Second, because dogs are hunters, they tend to chase wildlife as though hunting in a “pack,” which includes their human family. But animals such as raccoons, coyotes, porcupines, skunks, fishers, badgers, deer, moose, and bears may turn and attack the dog in self-defense. The result could easily be an injured or dead dog or even an injured owner. If a bear turns on a pursuing dog, the dog will likely run—right back to you, with an angry bear close behind!

Third, dogs are loyal and guard their pack. This is a wonderful trait until they encounter a strange dog or person in the woods, and then their natural inclination is to challenge the stranger. Dogs that have never been aggressive out on the city streets may suddenly be surprisingly hostile to strangers in the woods. Again, their behavior is unpredictable. We have heard of many incidents of dogs attacking people and other dogs in the conservation area. These incidents can be completely avoided by keeping dogs on leash!

Finally, remember that some trails into FLCA cross private land. The Marian Street and Half Way Brook trails are leased from private landowners, and Boggy Meadow Road is a right-of-way that passes through private land. And we’re aware that there are other informal trails on private land that people use to reach the conservation area. One trail neighbor has had a problem with unleashed dogs running through his garden—not good for good neighbor relations, which are critical for the success and future growth of FLCA. More immediately, if problems continue, our right to use some trails could be lost.

These rules aren’t meant to be oppressive to dogs or their owners. They are simply made necessary by the situation: a conservation area meant to protect and preserve wildlife, and a growing population of people and dogs seeking recreation. In many protected areas, dogs are banned completely. We don’t want to do that at the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area, but we do ask for dog owners’ cooperation. And we especially want to thank the many dog owners who enjoy FLCA while complying with the rules.

News and Views from the Wildlife Blind: February 2006

(Submitted by the Moose Patrol)

This past winter, we had a pair of Great Horned Owls nest in F.L.C.A. During the spring and summer, we had the pleasure of watching one of their young grow up. It was a real treat to watch a young owl learn the ropes. He learned quickly that he couldn't just sit out in the early morning sunshine, on a dead tree in the marsh, without the Blue Jays or Crows spotting him and chasing him into the thicker woods (We also got some good looks at a couple of Barred Owls.)



We had two pair of Great Blue Herons nesting in the F.L.C.A. Closer to the blind, we saw, more than once, a pair of Marsh Wrens, More recently, we saw a pair of Winter Wrens. We will try to keep an eye out for nests this season.



Our own bird count in the F.L.C.A for 2005 was 102 different species. For some reason, we have seen more Red Breasted Nuthatches this winter than ever before.



In the animal world, we had three separate moose sightings this past year; one was an adult female (700 lbs), and the other two were last year's calves (300–400 lbs). We also had three Black Bear sightings with the biggest one about 250 lbs.



We had two Coyote sightings; one, on his own, and two that crossed Boggy Meadow Road. Also, on Oct. 27, on Boggy Meadow Road, we had a rare good look at a Fisher. Other animals of interest have been Mink, Otters, Porkys, and, still, a few Beavers.

BBC Calendar/Walks and Talks/Spring–Summer 2006

Broad Brook Coalition is eager to involve members and friends in educational, experiential, and fun activities that highlight the resources of the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area. Bring friends and family, dress appropriately for the weather, bring a snack and drink, and enjoy. Suggestions regarding topics, new leaders, and past programs are always welcome. Call Bruce Hart, evenings, at 584-4176 (bhart2000@aol.com).

Invasive Species Work Day

Saturday, April 22, 9:00AM (*see page 4*)

Accessible Birding

Shirley Hilborn and Ann Lombard

Friday, April 28, 9:00–11:00 AM

Meet at North Farms Road entrance

The Hampshire Bird Club and Project Inspire will sponsor this program. Beyond the focus on accessibility, the walk is appropriate for beginner “bird watchers” seeking a more leisurely approach to understanding and appreciating this path into the outdoors. We’ll be looking for early migrants along the wheelchair-accessible path and then, if time and ability allow, delve a little deeper into the forest along the lake front. All ages and abilities are welcome. Bring binoculars.

Member/Donor Appreciation Day

Sunday, April 23, 1:00 (*see page 6*)

Shrub Island Planting

Saturday, May 6, 9:00 AM (*see page 4*)

Trail Work Day

Saturday, May 13, 9:00 AM–Noon (*see page 7*)

Mother's Day Birding

Lisa Rock and Pete Westover

Sunday, May 14, 7:00–9:00 AM

Meet at Moose Lodge parking area (a private lot generously shared with the citizens), end of Cooke Avenue, off Hatfield Street

This will be a beginner bird walk to introduce people to the wonders of birding but will also be of interest to intermediate birders. Lisa and Pete will lead folks down Boggy Meadow Road and on to the wildlife blind overlooking the wetland surrounding Broad Brook. If time allows we’ll also try to make it out to the dam that impounds Fitzgerald Lake. All ages are welcome. Bring binoculars. Conservation Works LLC and Eastern Mountain Sports have generously helped to make this program possible.

This That and Beaver Habitat

Gini Traub

Friday, June 2, 7:30–9:00 PM

Meet at North Farms Road entrance

Observe the changing sights and sounds that early evening brings as we walk through the forest to beaver habitat and lodges on Fitzgerald Lake. You are likely to see beaver, but bring binoculars. Gini will demonstrate some of the activities that support the Massachusetts Forest and Parks “Beaver Ecology” student program. Appropriate for children and parents and all adults. Flashlight and insect repellent might be helpful. For many, this is also an opportunity to be “out” after dark. If it’s clear, we’ll have sunset at 8:27, end of twilight at 9:01, and the moon is at 38%.

Wildflowers of Wood and Garden

Janet Bissell

Saturday, June 10, 10:00 AM–noon

Meet at Marian Street entrance (Routes 5&10/King Street north, left on Coles Meadow Road (across from State Police barracks), left on Marian Street, park at end.)

Join Janet for a walk to look for late spring ephemeral wildflowers and other flora. We’ll discuss the natural history, folklore, and identification of these wonderful forest plants. We’ll also discuss the identification of invasive species and the impact they have on biodiversity. Some of the native plants we can use in our gardens in place of invasives will be mentioned. We hope to make it to the wildlife blind overlooking the marsh. Janet is an avid amateur botanist and a Plant Conservation Volunteer with the New England Wildflower Society. She also leads plant walks for MassAudubon and is a docent to Smith College Botanic Garden. Bring a field guide and hand lens if you have them.

All Creatures Great and Small:

Children's Program

Bob Packard

Saturday, June 24, 1:00 PM

North Farms Road entrance

We’ll focus in on a child’s perspective, but Bob has the ability and knowledge to cover all topics with all ages. This Walk and Talk will embrace all questions, by adults or children, and on any topic you can imagine relating to FLCA. Birds, trees, amphibians, odonates, wildflowers, mammals, insects, you name it, and we’ll try to explain it. Parents need to be with the younger children, but all ages are welcome.

Please Join Us!

If you're not already a member, please complete this form and return it to
BROAD BROOK COALITION, P.O. Box 60566, Florence, MA 01062

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

_____ Membership dues: (per person or household): \$25.00

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

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

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) |
| _____ Mailings | _____ Land Preservation/Acquisition Committee |
| _____ Computer help | _____ BBC Board of Directors |
| _____ Volunteer at Interfaith Cot Shelter | _____ Educational/recreational program planning or leadership, |
| _____ Writer/reporter for newsletter | _____ Walks and Talks |
| _____ Newsletter editor | _____ Monitor housing issues in the City |

Introduction to Global Information Systems

James Thompson

Saturday, July 8, 10:00 AM–noon

Meet at Moose Lodge entrance

Do you have a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver? Would you like to learn how GPS is used for "real world" conservation and planning purposes right here in Northampton? Join us on an exercise to collect spatial data in the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area. Then, time permitting, we will actually download the data to a laptop computer in preparation for entry to the city's GIS. No prior GPS experience is necessary. Reservations requested (587-1285, jthompson@northamptonma.gov); let us know if you plan to bring a GPS unit. James is the Global Information System (GIS) Coordinator for Northampton.

Geocaching

Nate Costello

Saturday, July 15, 2:00–4:00 PM

Meet at North Farms Road entrance

Nate from Eastern Mountain Sports will be leading us on a treasure hunt. The up-and-coming hobby of geocaching is gaining popularity with families and individuals alike. Using the global positioning system

(GPS), we will venture into the woods and try to find a stash of small items in an old ammunition container. For more information on geocaching, go to <http://www.geocaching.com>. We will limit the group to around 16.

Dragonflies and Damselflies:

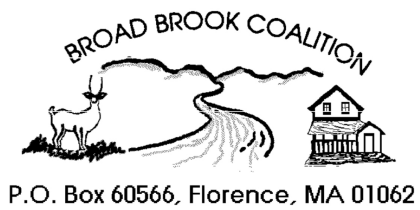
Jewels of the Wetlands

Bob Packard

Saturday, August 5, 1:00–3:00 PM

Meet at North Farms Road entrance

Their names, in themselves, elicit beauty, mystery, and curiosity: Ruby Meadowhawks, Green Jackets, Violet Dancers, Azure Bluets, and Common Basket-tails. Bob will once again lead us as we reacquaint ourselves with these fascinating creatures. With warm and sunny weather, there are excellent opportunities to observe these delicate creatures. Binoculars and a magnifying lens are helpful. No cell phones.



P.O. Box 60566, Florence, MA 01062

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