

Broad Brook Coalition

www.broadbrookcoalition.org

Volume 38, Issue #2, Fall 2026

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2025-2026

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ABOUT US

Broad Brook Coalition (BBC) is a nonprofit, all-volunteer organization incorporated in 1988 with the mission of preserving open space and promoting affordable housing. Under a memorandum of understanding with the Northampton Conservation Commission, BBC is responsible for the day-to-day management of the 936-acre Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area. BBC's goals are to maintain and enhance the diversity and integrity of wildlife species and habitat at FLCA, promote outreach and education, and provide public access for passive recreation that is compatible with habitat protection.

Our work in trail maintenance, stewardship, education, and land preservation to expand FLCA is funded by the generous support of our members and occasional grants.

DICK WYNNE PAGE 2

FIFTH-GRADE FIELD TRIP PAGE 3

Broad Brook Coalition Annual Meeting

Sunday, Nov. 15 — in person — 2:00–4:30 p.m.

Members and friends are cordially invited to attend Broad Brook Coalition's annual meeting on Sunday, November 15, at the Florence Civic Center, 90 Park St., Florence. This year's meeting will be in-person only, with no Zoom link. Light refreshments will be served at the Civic Center starting at 2:00 p.m. Please join us!

This year's speaker is **Dr. Christine Hatch** from the University of Massachusetts who will present a program titled **Embracing Change in Lake Ecosystems**. Here is a brief summary of her talk:

"The natural world is full of change, whether we are aware of it or not. It's comforting to think of thousand-year-old trees as having populated our forests long before we did, and counting on their presence long after we're gone, but even trees are temporary travelers across the landscape, though at a slower pace. To understand an ecosystem is to understand it at a point in time, evolving as it must from one state to another driven by myriad factors, many natural, some human. Through my work I have observed how much change human ingenuity can produce on a landscape in a relatively short time, and miraculously, how quickly



a buried wetland can recover given the right conditions and a nudge in the right direction. In this talk I will explore a brief history of Fitzgerald Lake (it wasn't always a lake, after all) as well as some of the current drivers of change in the ecosystem (temperature, beavers, water chemistry, geomorphology)."



2017

Dr. Hatch is Extension Professor of Water Resources and Climate Change in the Earth, Geographic, and Climate Sciences Department, Research-Extension Liaison for the Center for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment at the University of Massachusetts



2026

Amherst. She is a public member of the Massachusetts Water Resources Commission and the Massachusetts liaison to the Northeast USDA Climate Hub. In her research, she uses temperature to track the movement of water in hydrogeologic systems with diverse tools including piezometers, loggers, thermal imagery, distributed temperature sensing, and drones (UAV's).

Dick Wynne: 12/7/1940 – 5/20/2026

Broad Brook Coalition is sad to announce the loss of one of our longest-serving members, Dick Wynne, who passed away last May. As an abutter to what would eventually become the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area, Dick was one of the original members who came together to found BBC with a mission to preserve open space and promote affordable housing. As the conservation area grew from its original 147 acres to nearly a thousand today, Dick's involvement in its maintenance and management grew along with it.



Dick was one of the first members of the BBC Council of Members, which later changed its name to the Board of Directors. After several years on the council he stepped away to focus on his teaching work, but he rejoined in 2010 and served on the board continuously since then. Dick's special interest was in controlling invasive plants, and for many years he helped organize the annual BBC work days at North Farms Rd., Boggy Meadow Rd., and Cooke's Pasture. He was a familiar sight with his shovel, adze, and loppers, and likely logged more hours of invasive work than any other BBC member during his time on the board. If it was a work day, Dick was there. He often showed up with his battered pickup truck, which by the end of the session would be piled high with bulging plastic bags of multiflora rose, Japanese bittersweet, glossy buckthorn, and his particular nemesis, lesser celandine.

Several Board members were fortunate to visit Dick at home a few days before he entered hospice in May and listen to him reminisce about his life. It was an eventful one, with travels that took him as far as Tanzania, Kenya, and Madagascar while serving in the Peace Corps and the Navy, as well as a stint working on a cattle drive in California. He loved his teaching career, nature, the birds

at his feeder, and his motorcycles. As he said during our visit, "I liked chasing a little adventure and I could have gotten into some trouble, but I was really lucky in my life." His obituary can be found on Legacy.com.

Dick will be remembered for his cheerful attitude, his dedication to hard work, his camaraderie, and his love of life. Also, and by no means least, for his sly sense of humor, which can be glimpsed in this excerpt from a piece he wrote for a BBC newsletter some years ago, titled "Variation on a Summer Cruise":

Picture yourself on a summer cruise: it is late July, warm and sunny with a gentle breeze; friends are on your right and left; the waters are calm, as flat as a lake's... and indeed, you're on a lake, our own Fitzgerald Lake. Not your traditional cruise – you're tucked in a canoe or kayak, not waiting in line at a buffet table. Rather than roast beef or eclairs, our quarry is an inedible plant called water chestnut, *Trapa natans*, no relation to the delicious Chinese water chestnut, or to the chestnuts roasting on an open fire. . . .

I've been participating in our work/play days for the past four or five years. I see familiar faces who bring their kayak or canoe from year to year and join in the stewardship of the lake. . . . We invite you to join us next time. Come for a pleasant two or three hours of exercise; come for the camaraderie; come to experience a lapful of slimy plants as you paddle your kayak back to shore. Come join the fun!

We miss you, Dick!

—Dave Pritchard



Memorial for Dick Wynne

A group of Dick's friends, including present and past board members, gathered on July 19 at the end of the Fitzgerald Lake dock to remember



him. Dick was part of the volunteer crew that helped build the new dock in 2016, and he launched his bright red kayak from there every year since then to go forth and

pull water chestnut, so it was the perfect spot to get together and toast him with margaritas. This was not strictly compliant with conservation area regulations – a fact Dick would have greatly appreciated. Many of Dick's friends in attendance participated in telling stories and warm remembrances of their time with Dick, whose cheerful attitude and irreverent sense of humor will be greatly missed by all.



Fifth-Grade Field Trip



Again this year we were able to host students from Kieran Slattery's fifth-grade class at Jackson Street Elementary School for a field trip to Fitzgerald Lake. Kieran has been a supporter of this educational program since it began three years ago. On April 29th he brought his class of 19 students, divided into groups of 6-7, to rotate through each of the three study sites. This worked well in that the students were able to have a close-up experience with each of the presenters.



Rich Baker worked with the students at the beaver lodges. The lodges are quite active, and although the students were visiting in the middle of the morning and the beavers were not available, students were able to easily see signs of their work, including one very large tree the beavers had completely girdled but which is still standing.



Naturalist Molly Hale helped the students explore the vernal pool. One of the most interesting finds was the caddis fly larvae peeping from inside the casings they build

from sand and twigs. They also found wood frog tadpoles, mosquito larvae, and tiny translucent fairy shrimp.



The dock was the last of the three sites to check out. The students brought with them a seven-foot-long branch so they could measure the depth of the mud just beside the dock. They were able to sink it into the bottom of the lake up to the six foot mark. Kate Maiolatesi helped to verify their measurement. Maybe the most exciting find was the three long black water snakes swimming close to the dock. With these two findings, the students decided not to go swimming!

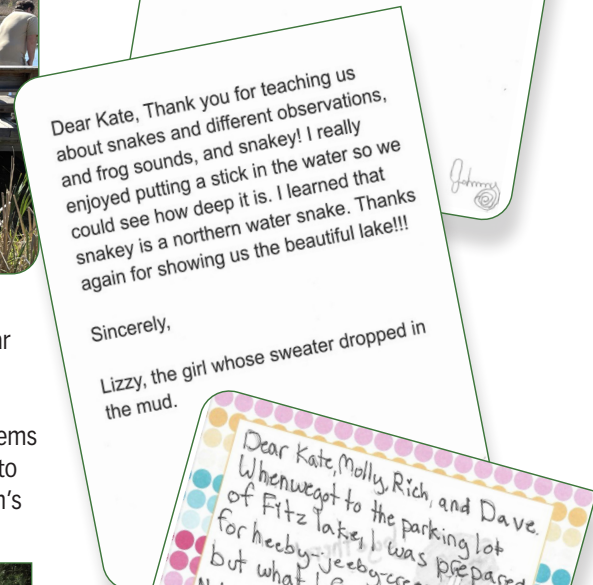


We are hopeful that this field trip from Jackson Street School will become a regular occurrence and give new students the opportunity to explore the wild habitat surrounding Fitzgerald Lake. Fifth grade seems to be the ideal time for students' curiosity to bloom, and we are fortunate to have Kieran's enthusiasm to make it happen.



Below are a few examples of the thank-you letters we received from the students who attended the field trip.

—Kate Maiolatesi



Conservation News in Brief

Wildlife Blind Closed for Repairs

We noticed at the end of May that the wildlife blind off the Marian St. trail was listing to one side, and the stairs had shifted away from the supporting pad. After further inspection, the board decided to close off the stairs with Caution tape and look for someone to undertake the repairs. The blind has stood for 26 years with only one other major repair needed, a tribute to its original design and construction. We look forward to reopening it once the work has been completed.



it is nearly impossible to eradicate glossy buckthorn once it is established, we hope to manage these patches so as to reduce its impact and halt its spread.

Glossy Buckthorn Removal

For a second year Tom Annese of the Planning and Sustainability Department organized several BBC work crews to tackle the proliferation of glossy buckthorn at FLCA. As with many invasive species, glossy buckthorn was originally introduced from Europe and Asia as an ornamental but has since spread widely into forests, fields, and wetlands. Left unchecked it forms dense thickets that outcompete native species. Working along the Fishing Place and Shore Trails in May and September we hand-pulled the smaller saplings and under Tom's direction cut and daubed the larger stems. While

Water Chestnut

We continued to tackle the water chestnut in the lake by "pulling early, pulling often"—which this year meant organizing four



outings (a fifth in mid-September was canceled due to weather). This summer's haul was 174 pounds, compared to 260 in 2025 and 72 in 2024. While the totals have

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Book Pick: Edward Howe Forbush, *Birds of Massachusetts and Other New England States* (3 volumes, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1925-1929)

"I watched the Cedar Waxwings in a canker-worm year, when all through the orchards the little brown 'inch-worm' caterpillars began to cut holes in the leaves. Then came the eager birds in flocks and there they stayed, often whispering to one another and always catching worms. Such gourmands they were! They ate until they

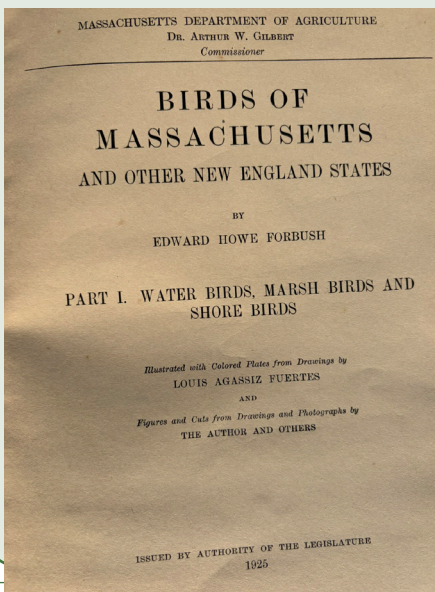
could eat no more, only to sit about on the branches or play with one another awhile, and then eat again. The canker-worms stripped a few of the old trees, but the Waxwings cleared most of them and saved the leaves, thereby saving the fruit also. When the cherries were ripe these birds always found them. They stayed in the

cherry trees with the same persistence that they showed in their work with the canker-worms. They have a habit, when satiated, of sitting together, sometimes five or six on the same limb, all facing the same way, and at such a time I have seen a cherry or a caterpillar passed from one to another until it had passed up and down the line before one would eat it."

This Forbush passage is characteristic in its loving regard for its subjects, whose moods he ventures to read in an unscientific but irresistible manner; in its fine descriptive language, such as "whispering" for the high-frequency but soft vocalization of these birds when they're gathered together; and in its care to point out the benefit conferred by the waxwings in clearing orchards of insect pests. Forbush (1858-1929) spent most of his career serving the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture as an economic ornithologist.

Decades ago I had the luck to inherit a copy of Forbush – all three big volumes. Now long out of print, its full content, including color plates, is accessible for free at the Biodiversity Heritage Library and HathiTrust. Most of the plates are from paintings by Louis Agassiz Fuertes (1874-1927; namesake of, but no relation to, the once-admired zoologist and paleontologist Louis Agassiz, now deplored

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fluctuated quite a bit over the years, the trend is clearly downward, not only year by year but also over the season. Our first pull this year netted 72 pounds while the final pull was a mere 5 pounds. A big thank-you to Tina White and Holly Mitchell for organizing this effort!

Japanese Stiltgrass

Laurie Sanders and Tom Annese have been keeping an eye on patches of Japanese stiltgrass growing in the meadow along the Swamp Forest Trail, and in early October they decided it was time to go for a pulling session. Japanese stiltgrass grows 1 to 3 feet high and can form dense stands along trails and roads that can quickly spread into the woodland understory. Its leaves are narrow and lance-shaped, with a silver midrib. Because it is an annual and spreads by seeds, it is critical to pull the plants before they set seed. We'll be back next year to see how well we did.



Blue-green Algae (Cyanobacteria)

As in recent years, several patches of blue-green algae were again spotted in Fitzgerald Lake over the summer. Not all cyanobacteria are toxic, but the toxic strains can present serious health problems for humans and in particular dogs (see the article "Blue-green Algae at Fitzgerald Lake" on p. 4 of our Fall



2024 newsletter). Tina White contacted the Northampton Department of Health and Human Services to report the sightings, which led to the establishment of a pilot program between DHHS and volunteers from BBC to monitor the lake on a weekly basis throughout September for possible presence of harmful bacteria. DHHS will determine whether to resume the monitoring next summer.

Continued on page 8...

for his racist theories). Upon Fierres's untimely death, Allan Brooks took over; both artists liked to group similar species in a single landscape – a raven and two kinds of crows on an ocean cliff, three kinds of herons and two kinds of egrets in a swamp, three kinds of swallows in a breezy sunset, seven kinds of warblers in a tree that's just begun to flower.

The entry for each species proceeds from the requisite field-guide facts (the range data showing us what a century of climate change can do) to "Haunts and Habits," the main course, a delicious casserole of observations. The final section, "Economic Status," is often an argument for bug-eating as fair compensation for crop-eating. In "Haunts and Habits" Forbush supplements his own observations with those of his thousand correspondents – experts and amateurs alike, and the subjects of a wonderful *New Yorker* piece from 1966 by the great essayist (and author of *Charlotte's Web* and *Stuart Little*) E.B. White. Entitled "Mr. Forbush's Friends," it includes some one hundred snippets – artfully edited – from these "tipsters," as White calls them; for instance, "Mr. Harold Cooke, of Kingston. Found puffin in garage, offered it spaghetti. Spaghetti was accepted. February 1, 1922." (You can find the full text on the *New Yorker* website.)

E.B. White pointed me to a Forbush bit that will get a shiver out of anyone who's spent time outdoors this past summer. Here Forbush

has visited a black-crowned night heron community in Barnstable, Mass.: "The windless air was stagnant and fetid; swarms of stinging midges, deer-flies and mosquitoes attacked at will; and vicious wood-ticks, hanging from the vegetation, reached for me with their clinging claws, and crawled upon my limbs, seeking an opening to bury their heads in my flesh."

—Holly Mitchell



Tree Flowers around Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area

There are over 80 species of woody trees and shrubs growing in the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area. The flowers of many of these are often out of sight high in the canopy and we only see them up close if squirrels eat then drop the blossoms or if a strong wind blows them down. The following photos illustrate just some of the tree flowers you can find around the Lake.

– Peter Russell



Flowers of the Northern Catalpa growing along the path from the North Farms Road entrance



Flowers of the Black Locust, an invasive species in Massachusetts, at the North Farms Road entrance



Flowers of the Chokecherry growing on the edge of FLCA on North Farms Road



Flowers of the American Elderberry, common along the lakeside



Flowers of the female Red Maple are found around the lake



Flowers of the male Red Maple



Flowers of the invasive Norway Maple tree, found around the Lake



The separate male (left) and female (right) catkins on an American Hornbeam on the boardwalk



The male (dangling) and smaller female (upright) catkins of the Gray Birch



The large male and smaller female flowers of the Gray Alder near the dam



The dangling male catkins of the American Hazel along with the smaller female flower (left, on Boggy Meadow Road)



One of the few Pussy Willows found around the lake, this one is in front of the wildlife blind



Flowers of the Silky Dogwood, common along the boardwalk



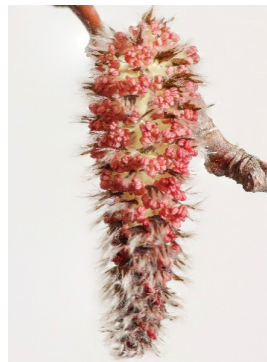
Flowers of the Nannyberry growing along the boardwalk



Flowers of the Northern Arrowwood growing near the Fishing Place



Flowers of a Big-Fruit Hawthorn growing along the Swamp Forest Trail



The male catkins of a Quaking Aspen on the Swamp Forest Trail



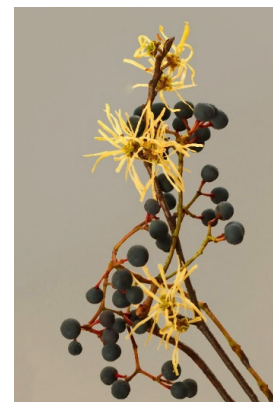
Flowers of a Blackhaw growing in Cooke's Pasture



Flowers of a Sassafras tree growing along the Swamp Forest Trail



Flowers of the Northern Spicebush can be seen in early spring along many of the trails around the lake



Flowers of a Witch Hazel entwined with wild grapes along the Swamp Forest Trail

Conservation News in Brief continued...



Boggy Meadow Rd. Accessible Trail

Work on the soft-surface all-persons trail at the Cooke Ave. entrance to FLCA was completed by the City in July. The trail runs from the Cooke Ave. parking lot along Boggy Meadow Rd. for about a third of a mile, ending at the scenic Pine Brook beaver swamp. This project has roughly doubled the portion of the FLCA accessible to all, adding on to the paved path and boardwalk at

the North Farms Rd. entrance. Sturdy benches and turnouts are placed at intervals along both trails. An important reminder from the ADA website: "Accessible spaces benefit everyone – not just those with permanent disabilities. Parents with strollers, elderly individuals with mobility challenges, and those recovering from injuries all appreciate environments designed with universal accessibility in mind."



2026 Walks and Talks

With the exception of the spring bird walk, which was rained out on two Saturdays in a row, the weather smiled on this year's programs, and attendance was strong. We started with two spring nature walks, went on to fire-loving fungi and ferns, and finished with summer wildflowers and fall mushrooms. Thanks as always to our knowledgeable and enthusiastic leaders!

Wildlife Search at Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area

Wildlife ecologist Brad Timm led our first walk in early May. Unsurprisingly, birds proved the easiest animals to see and hear at this time of year, with early migrants beginning to establish their territories. Louisiana waterthrushes and pine warblers were heard singing, and tree swallows were spotted over the lake. Mammals and amphibians were less evident, but Brad discussed their various overwintering strategies, food sources, and behaviors as we passed through the different habitats. The takeaway: you don't need to see them to learn about them.



Spring Nature Walk

Spring was well advanced when Rich Baker led this walk later in May. In addition to the increased birdsong, there were a number of spring ephemerals to be admired, including trout lilies, red trillium, dwarf ginseng, and a jack-in-the-pulpit. Rich brought a dipnet to use at the vernal pool off the Fishing Place trail, where he snagged wood frog tadpoles, caddis fly larvae, and an adult wood frog.



Fire-loving Fungi Walk



Following the November 2024 brush fire at Fitzgerald Lake a number of pyrophilous (fire-loving) fungi were found at the burn site. Peter Russell and Karen Hidalgo began this walk with a talk at Laurel Park, after which participants walked to the burn site on the Swamp Forest Trail to look for these seldom-seen fungi. Examples found included the Stalked Bonfire Cup, Charcoal Eyelash, Pine Fire Fungus, and Bonfire Scalycap. Pyrophilous fungi can lie dormant for years on the forest floor until fire creates the necessary condition to fruit, so the Fitzgerald Lake fire has provided a rare treat for mushroom enthusiasts in the Pioneer Valley.



Learn Your Ferns

At the beginning of Randy Stone's late-June fern walk he handed out a list of the ten most common ferns in our area, courtesy of the Pioneer Valley Fern Society. By the time the walk was over we had checked off all ten, plus three others that were also on the list. Randy explained the clues used in identifying ferns, including how they grow (in clumps or individually) and how finely divided their leaflet margins are (once-cut, twice-cut, etc.). As often in identifying plants, it helps to carry a good hand lens.

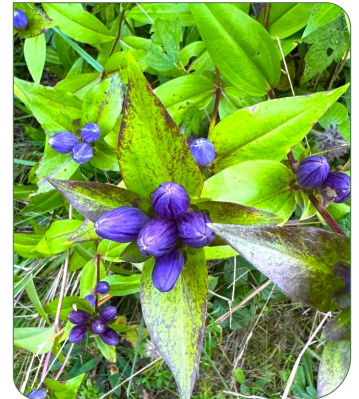


Late Summer Wildflowers



Local botanist Connie Parks led this walk along Boggy Meadow Rd. past the beaver swamp and on to the dam, stopping along the way to identify and discuss nearly 40 species of plants.

Some, such as the fall asters, Joe Pye weed, and Queen Anne's lace, were large and showy, but many others were small and in some cases rather inconspicuous. Each, however, had a story to talk about, such as the arrangement of their parts, the habitat they're found in, or their actual or reputed medicinal qualities. The prize find on this walk, at least in terms of beauty, was the closed or bottle gentian at the far end of the dam, with its deep purple-blue waxy flowers – a lovely specimen to end this informative walk with.



The Fungi of Fitzgerald Lake



Once again, Peter Russell led a September walk from the North Farms Rd. entrance in search of mushrooms. Peter is working on a second book cataloging the fungi of Fitzgerald Lake and nearby Laurel Park, and his expansive knowledge makes him an excellent leader for this walk. In addition to identifying the mushrooms, he discussed the role fungi play in the forest ecosystem, such as their mycorrhizal partnerships with trees and their ability to decompose organic matter. Participants were amused to learn that licking certain types of mushrooms can help in identifying them – a practice Peter strongly discourages in amateurs!



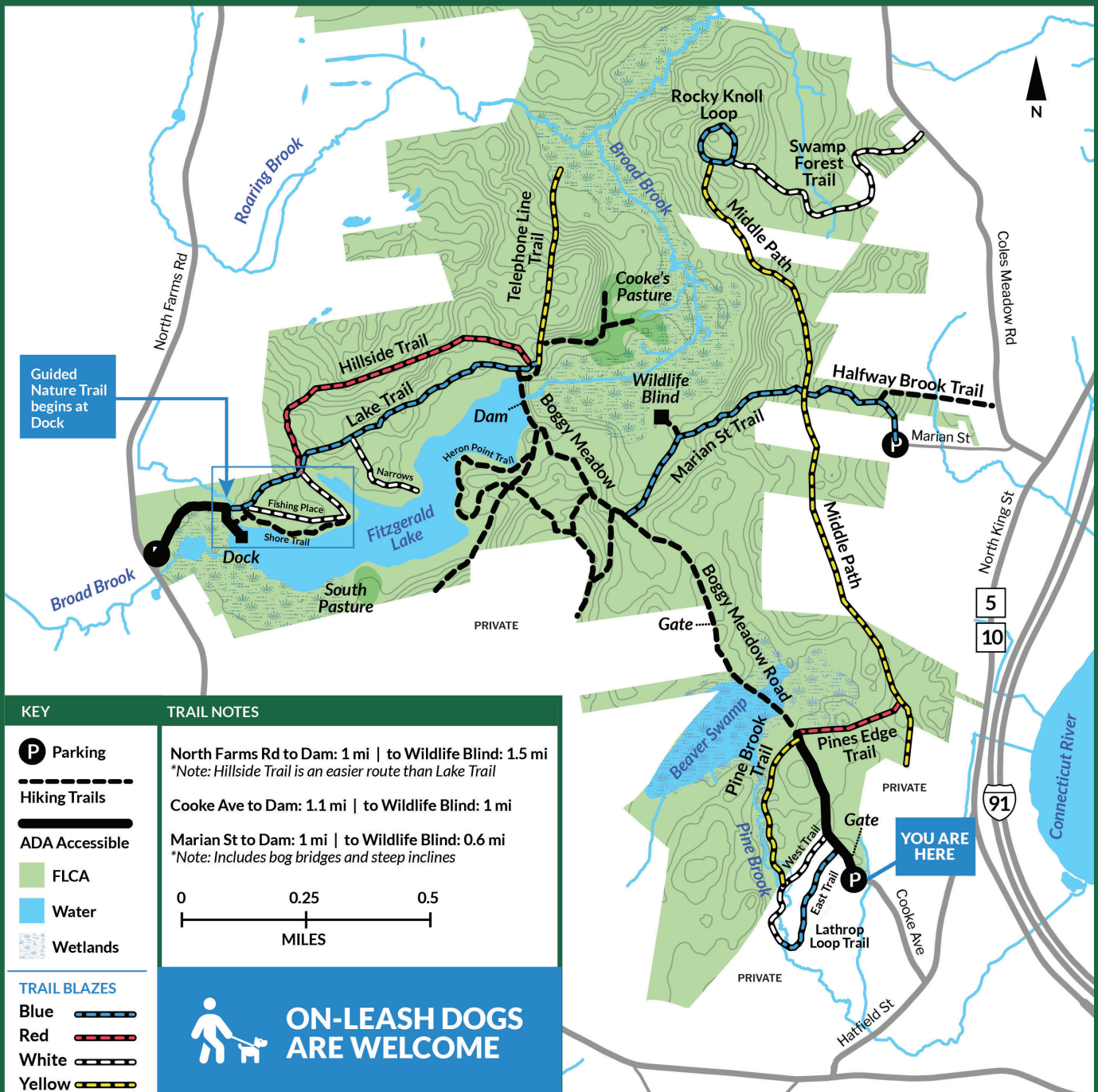
New Map of FLCA

The current map of the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area, as displayed on our kiosks and in our publications, is the result of many years of piecemeal updates as new parcels were added to the original version. After a review of this legacy map, the Broad Brook board decided to stop updating and begin over with a fresh design. Working with Seth Gregory, of Seth Gregory Design, we have come up with a provisional map that addresses the problems of readability, accuracy, and aesthetic appeal of the old map. A final version will be approved later this fall. Many thanks to Rich Baker for leading this project, and to Seth Gregory for clarifying the many issues that surfaced during our meetings. We hope you like it!

Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area



Broad Brook
Coalition



Species Spotlight

(This is the sixteenth in a series of articles featuring species of animals and plants that are readily found in the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area. A fuller version of this article will be placed on the BBC website, broadbrookcoalition.org.)

Common Name: Common Water Snake, also Northern Water Snake

Scientific Name: *Nerodia sipedon*

Physical Description: A usually dark snake but can vary from dark brown to light gray, with reddish brown to black bands or blotches across the back. Young are strongly marked, but pattern may be difficult to see in older snakes.

Size: ≈24–42 inches long.

Distribution: S and E Maine and S Quebec south to N North Carolina and west to Colorado. The only large water snake in New England.

Habitat: Swamps, marshes, lakes, and streams.

Diet: Primarily small fish and amphibians, also crayfish, insects, and small mammals.

Reproduction: Female gives birth to ≈ 20-40 live young.



Interesting Facts:

- Are highly aquatic, spending most of their time in or under water or on land near the water's edge. Can remain underwater more than an hour, especially to avoid predators.
- Can capture prey both underwater and on shore.
- Are often seen basking on logs or in vegetation near the water, especially in spring.
- Overwinter either underwater, in beaver lodges, or underground in crevices or abandoned burrows; often overwinter as a group of multiple individuals together, sometimes with other snake species.
- Are nonvenomous but are frequently mistaken for the somewhat similarly marked cottonmouth, which are not found north of Virginia.

Please visit our updated website at
www.broadbrookcoalition.org.

There, you can view upcoming events (such as our Walks/Talks and Work Days), learn about the animals and plants found at Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area, and access current and previous newsletters, among many other features.

Broad Brook Coalition
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BBC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. We do not share your information with any other organization.

☐ \$25 for Individual membership ☐ \$35 for Family membership. *All contributions are tax deductible.*

Name _____

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___ New membership category! Volunteer 4 hours during the year on a board-approved activity to qualify as a BBC member.

Email us at info@broadbrookcoalition.org for details.

___ Sign me up for a paperless newsletter (email address required).

___ I prefer to receive a printed newsletter by mail.

___ I've included an additional tax-deductible contribution to the Land Preservation/Stewardship Fund.

Donate Online! Renew your membership or join BBC on our website (click on Join/Donate)

The Broad Brook Coalition needs your help, too. We are very grateful for membership dues, but want you to know that you can contribute in other ways. Members and friends are needed to help carry out our goals.

Please consider one or more of the following volunteer opportunities:

- ___ Occasional Work Days (invasive plants)
- ___ Educational Outreach – Walks, social media, newsletter articles
- ___ Other (please indicate your expertise or interest) _____