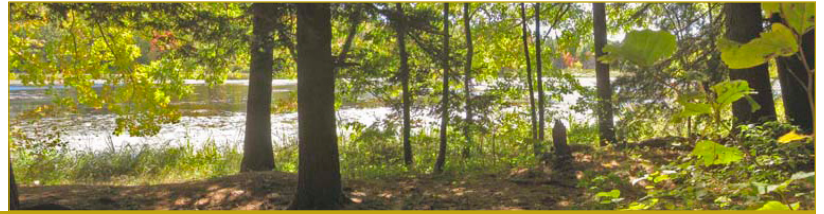


BROAD BROOK COALITION



www.broadbrookcoalition.org

Volume 33, Issue #2, Fall 2021

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2020-2021

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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 900-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.

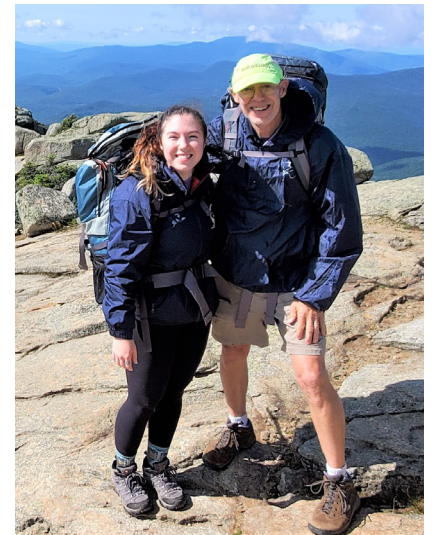
Our work in trail maintenance, stewardship, education, and land preservation to expand FLCA is funded by the generous support of our members and occasional grants.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE p.2 • NEW TRAIL p.4 • BEAR THERAPY! p.5

**Broad Brook Coalition Annual Meeting
Sunday, Nov. 7 — via Zoom — 5:00 to 7:00 PM**

Members and friends are cordially invited to attend Broad Brook Coalition's annual meeting on Sunday, November 7. Due to the continuing coronavirus pandemic, this year's meeting will again be virtual. Members will receive information about how to access the meeting by email prior to the date. In addition to the Zoom link, the email includes short biographical notes about the three candidates proposed for election to the Board of Directors; a vote will be carried out virtually during the meeting.

This year's speaker is Pete Westover of Conservation Works, LLC. His November 7 talk, titled "Management of Habitat in Forests and on Natural Lands," will focus on forest and natural lands habitat management, starting with Cooke's Pasture of the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area and broadening to bring in management practices of a range of conservation groups and state and federal agencies. How does climate change relate to land stewardship? Does it make sense to create small clear-cuts on forested land? How can grassland and early successional shrubland habitats best be maintained? How does climate change influence the management of non-native invasives? The presentation will include illustrations from drone and remote wildlife cameras, maps, and ground photographs.



Pete Westover and daughter Meredith on a hike in Maine

Pete lives in Whately and is managing partner of Conservation Works, LLC, which he founded together with Terry Blunt in 2005. He has focused on conservation matters in the Valley for more than four decades and has worked throughout New England on wildlife habitat issues, land protection, agricultural concerns, breeding bird monitoring for the Mass Dept of Fish & Game, land and forest management plans, assistance to Massachusetts tribal nations on land issues, and collaboration with scores of land trusts and municipalities as well as colleges and private landowners. Pete teaches periodically at Hampshire College and has taught forest management at Antioch New England.

President's Message: WOODPECKER WORLD

As the end of summer rolls around, I'm always sad to see my favorite birds depart on their arduous journeys south. The local colony of barn swallows is very punctual: both adults and a fresh crop of juveniles leave together the last week of August. At the same time, warblers slip through quietly in their somber fall plumage and the catbirds that have been nesting in the bushes outside my house disappear without a fuss. By the end September, the hummingbirds are gone, leaving the phoebes to dart out for insects from their favorite perches in the apple trees. Soon after, almost all of the remaining migrants are on their way. Nonetheless, many birds hang around all winter or migrate into our neck of the woods from points north. Of all of the year-round residents, I find woodpeckers particularly appealing. While they share many characteristics in common, each species has its own variations on a common theme.

Common Woodpecker Features

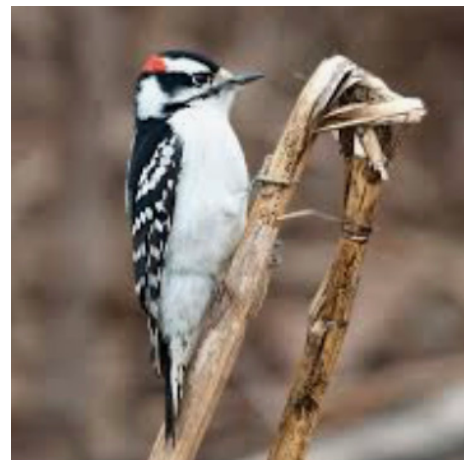
Male woodpeckers all make their presence known by drumming on tree trunks or other resonant surfaces to attract females and defend their territories against intruders. Both males and females excavate nest holes in the trunks or limbs of dead trees, and both take turns incubating the eggs and feeding the young. In the summer, woodpecker diets consist of a wide variety of insects and other invertebrates which they pick off tree branches, shrubs, and even the ground with their long, specialized tongues. Notably, their tongues can extend up to two inches beyond the tip of their beaks and, when not in use, coil up toward the back of their skulls owing to a special arrangement of bones, cartilage, and muscle. In fall and winter, woodpeckers consume mostly berries, fruit, seeds, and nuts and are especially fond of the suet that many of us offer them. Whether drumming, feeding, or climbing tree trunks, they are supported by specialized stiff tail feathers. Of the six species of woodpecker that commonly breed in New England, five are residents and only one is truly migratory. For the most part, our local woodpeckers are not yet imperiled by climate change, although their ranges are pushing farther northward as the temperature rises.



Hairy Woodpecker

Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers
Persistent short bursts of tapping in the trees above us often mean that a Downy or Hairy Woodpecker is nearby, searching for food in crevices within the bark. Both are widespread across North America, and are found in a wide variety of habitats from woodlands to swamps as long as dead trees are available for nesting and food. These two woodpeckers look a lot alike with their black-and-white checked plumage and white stripe down their backs; in both species, males are distinguished from females solely by a small red patch on the back of their heads. Their names derive from the nature of the feathers in their long white back stripes; whereas the Downy's are soft, those of the Hairy are more, well, hair-like. They also differ significantly in size and specific behaviors. The Hairy is more reclusive, yet noticeably louder and more aggressive when aroused. Downies, the smallest North American woodpeckers, have a fine-tipped bill that allows them to pick tiny insects from bark and leaves and even weed stems; in the winter, they often forage together with chickadees, titmice, and nuthatches.

It's hard to miss the similarity in the plumage, vocalizations, and drumming of Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers and, consequently, to believe they are closely related despite their difference in size. Not so. Genetic analysis has established that the evolutionary lineages of Downy and Hairy parted company roughly 6 million years ago and that they are more closely related to several other North American woodpeckers



Downy Woodpecker

than they are to each other. Why then do these two species resemble each other so closely? The answer seems to be plumage mimicry in which one species derives an advantage from looking like another when they both occupy the same range. One theory is that the plumage of the Downy might discourage potential predators who think they are encountering the larger and more aggressive Hairy.

For the most part, our local woodpeckers are not yet imperiled by climate change, although their ranges are pushing farther northward as the temperature rises



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

Male yellow-bellied sapsuckers announce their arrival in April with a loud and resonant burst of staccato drumming that slowly diminishes in speed and volume. True to their name, sapsuckers drill parallel rows of holes in the bark of deciduous trees and lap up the sap that emerges with their specialized tongues; the sugary sap droplets also attract insects which are an important part of the sapsucker summer diet. Remarkably, this feeding behavior is not instinctive, but taught to the young by their parents. The only truly migratory woodpecker in North America, most sapsuckers spend their winters in the southeastern U.S., Mexico, the Caribbean islands, and Central America. Nonetheless, an errant few do stay around like the one that I found a couple of years ago disconsolately clinging to a tree in early January when the temperature was 6 degrees F!



Northern Flicker

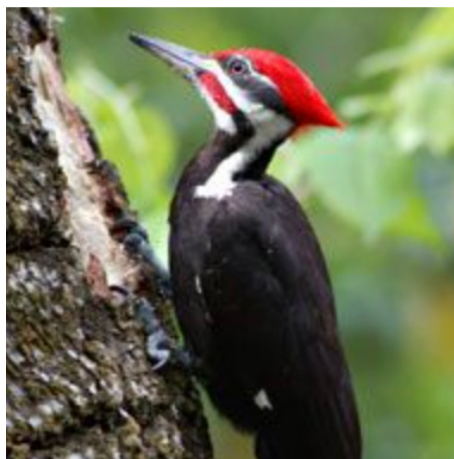
Neither shy nor retiring, Flickers are easy to spot by their distinctive facial markings and, in flight, by their prominent white rump patch and golden wing linings. They're also quite noisy, given to a loud wicker, a short but penetrating *kee-yer*, or persistent drumming, preferably on a metal fence or gutter to garner the most attention. Flickers frequently feed on the ground and I'm always pleased to see them on my lawn in the summer, probing for ants, grubs, or other invertebrates and gobbling them up with their long, barbed tongues that are coated with sticky saliva.

it also makes its presence known by the deep, rectangular holes it makes in rotten tree trunks and fallen logs in search of carpenter ants and larvae of wood-boring beetles, its favorite foods. This effort often results in a very visible pile of wood chips on the ground below.



Red-bellied Woodpecker

Although it would have been hard to find a Red-bellied Woodpecker in New England a few decades ago, they have become widespread, frequently seen or heard in woods, orchards, forest edges, parks, and backyards. They are eclectic in the foods they consume, which even include small vertebrates such as tree frogs and small fish. This woodpecker has a black-and-white barred back, tan face and breast, and an eye-catching daub of red on the crown (male) and back (male and female) of the head, but where's the red belly? You have to look closely. There's a small reddish patch on their belly where it joins the underside of the tail which is very hard to see. These woodpeckers are quite noisy and males also love to drum on hollow tree trunks to attract the attention of a female who, if convincingly beguiled, will join him in a drumming duet.



Pileated Woodpecker

The Pileated Woodpecker, the largest woodpecker in North America, is a denizen of mature forests and is not averse to life in the suburbs if there are enough big trees for nesting and feeding. While easily identified by its size, striking red crest, bold white stripe on head and neck, and an almost manic whinnying,

As winter rolls around, I hope you'll enjoy the woodpeckers as much as I do!
—Bob Zimmermann

Woodpecker Populations in North America:	
Downy.....	13 million
Hairy.....	8.5 million
Red-bellied.....	16 million
Flicker.....	10 million
Sapsucker	10 million
Pileated.....	2.6 million

FLCA's Newest Trail

When the City acquired the 53-acre Wilbur parcel last winter, planning was begun for the establishment of a new walking trail to take advantage of its scenic properties. Representatives from the BBC board and Lathrop Community joined Tom Annese from the City's Office of Planning and Sustainability in the spring to scout out a route that would offer the best views with the least disturbance to the parcel's habitat. After considering several possibilities, it was decided to build a single trail along the east bank of Pine Brook, the stream that crosses the Lathrop property on its way to the Connecticut River. Upstream from Lathrop, Pine Brook was dammed by beavers some years ago to form the large dead-tree swamp visible from Boggy Meadow Road. Just below the long curving dam that creates the swamp are two smaller dams that back the water up into two quiet pools.

The new Pine Brook Trail branches off from the Lathrop Loop Trail at its lower end and follows the stream up past the beaver dams before turning east and connecting to Boggy Meadow Road at the edge of the dead-tree swamp. In its lower portion it meanders through stands of hemlock, white pine, oak, and other hardwoods. Although the parcel was selectively cut for timber several years ago, there are many large trees left standing, along with clearings left by the loggers that are already beginning to show signs of forest regeneration. The trail is of similar difficulty as other FLCA trails – mostly easy walking but with the occasional rocks and roots to navigate. There are many good views of the stream along the way, including a scenic overlook from the top of a streamside boulder, as well as good looks at the impressive beaver dams and the peaceful pools behind them.

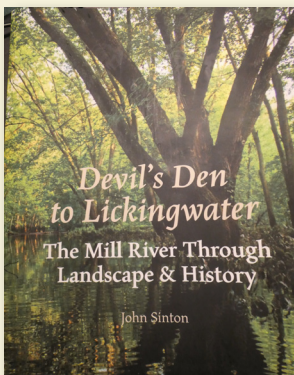
Many thanks to the members of the BBC Trails Committee (known to themselves as the Boggle Your Mind Bog Bridge Boys) for all their hard work in building and blazing the trail and installing the bog bridges where needed. This is a lovely trail to walk. Enjoy!

—Dave Pritchard



Book Review

Devil's Den to Lickingwater: The Mill River Through Landscape & History
John Sinton • Levellers Press 2018



I live just across the street from the Mill River, in view of the Haydenville Brass Works, which I knew had been destroyed in the 1874 Mill River disaster. But I didn't know much else about the river until I discovered John Sinton's recent book with its intriguing title. Devil's Den, I learned, is a cascade near the river's headwaters in Goshen, while Lickingwater is a former fording place in downtown Northampton from which the river entirely disappeared after being diverted toward the Oxbow in 1940, having flooded the town one too many times. Sinton, a professed "river rat," has done an impressive amount of research into the ecological, social, commercial, and environmental history of the river from the time of glacial Lake Hitchcock some 20,000 years ago up to today's forward-looking Mill River Greenway Initiative. He has pulled this information together in a highly readable format that

can be read straight through or browsed as a reference book with equal pleasure. Its five chapters focus on geology and indigenous occupation, early colonial settlement, the first mills and factories, the height of industrial development and factory villages, and finally the floods and environmental degradation that led to the diversion of the river away from downtown and to modern efforts to reimagine it as a recreational resource. There are many engravings, paintings, and old photographs throughout, and if you like maps, you're going to love this book. I was especially drawn to the Environmental Transformation sections that conclude each chapter, summarizing the effects on the landscape from each successive period of habitation and development. These transformations were rarely benign, at least as seen from today's perspective, but while he gives a forthright account of such matters as water pollution and the influx of invasive species, Sinton never loses sight of the river as a resource that has enriched the lives of local people in many more ways than simply as a source of power. His personal attachment to rivers in general and to the Mill River in particular is evident on every page; as he puts it in his introduction, "I have written a love letter to a place deep in my heart."

—Dave Pritchard

Do you have a favorite book of natural history or environmental study? We invite our members and friends to send us your review of a book that may have inspired you to learn more about or engage more deeply with the natural world. Reviews can be sent to info@broadbrookcoalition.org.

Bear Therapy!

Like many of us, given COVID restrictions and winter, by mid-April 2021 I was feeling bored and cooped up. On April 15th I was standing on my back deck, trying to soak up some spring sunlight, fresh air, and warmth. I looked down into the gully through which Pine Brook runs, and spotted a very, very, very fat mama bear and her cub. Mama was eating the ample buffet of skunk cabbage that had grown on both sides of the brook, after the spring rains but before the trees leafed in and blocked the sun down there. Her cub was working out the fine points of how to walk. I pulled out my mobile phone and made a shaky video, thinking this would be a one-off moment I needed to capture before it ended. As it turned out, over the next three weeks mama and cub visited and hung out nearly daily when the weather was favorable. This amazing bit of wild life was just what the doctor ordered to renew my sense of hope and well-being.

Over the next two weeks I made a series of videos of their exploits. The cub got better at walking, which increased its enthusiasm for playing, which eventually led to its practicing its hunting skills by attacking mama. I became obsessed: I switched to a better camera, I bought a nice tripod, I built a makeshift wildlife blind out of an old tarp and some driveway stakes. Mama noticed me, but for the most part just kept munching skunk cabbage, suckling her cub, napping, and occasionally grabbing the cub in her mouth and tossing it several feet away when its sneak attacks got on her nerves. After the first week in May the bears had moved on. I hope these screenshots bring you joy, especially when you are in need of some, like they did for me. Peace!

—Michael Kesten

*You can find the 8 videos from which these screenshots were taken by going to YouTube.com and searching:
BEAR 4-15-21, BEAR 4-25-21, BEAR 4-26-21, BEAR 4-28-21, BEAR 5-3-21, BEAR 5-7-21.*



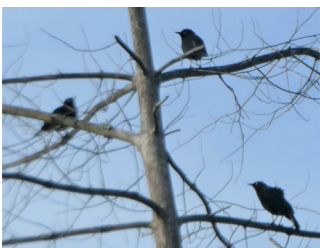


2021 Walks and Talks

Covid-19 shut down BBC's walk programs last year, but happily the leaders all agreed to reschedule for 2021, and despite continuing concerns about the pandemic we were able to add another walk to the mix. Like many other environmental groups in the Valley, BBC restricted attendance to 10 people in addition to program leaders and encouraged social distancing as much as possible. Because we were outdoors masks were optional, though many did choose to wear them at least part of the time.



Birds: First up was Laura Beltran's bird walk along Boggy Meadow Rd. in early May. This was a particularly successful outing, with a total of 41 species spotted en route to the dam. The high point was an excellent view of three Rusty Blackbirds perched together in a dead tree in the beaver swamp fairly close to the path. Rusty Blackbirds, with their bright yellow eye and glossy black plumage, are listed as Vulnerable by the International Union of Conservation of Nature, so it's always heartening to find them. Other species of note included two vireos, six warblers, a Hooded Merganser, and a Great Blue Heron that had already occupied one of the nests farther back in the swamp.



Wildflowers: Botanist Connie Parks led a Mother's Day wildflower walk the following week, looking in particular for spring ephemerals – plants that bloom before the canopy leaves out and shades the forest floor. Though typically small and sometimes hard to spot, these flowers are among the prettiest of the year, and their short bloom time means there are only a few weeks each year to enjoy them. Among the standouts that Connie identified were dwarf ginseng, foamflower, American trout-lily, Jack-in-the-pulpit, and the lovely fringed polygala.



Ferns, Trees, and Shrubs:

The next two walks were led by forester and fern enthusiast Randy Stone. His June walk featured the ferns of Fitzgerald Lake – where they grow, how to identify them, and information about their remarkable life cycles. Then in September Randy returned for a tree and shrub walk through the same habitat, taking a broader look at this same patch of forest. Starting with the four most common species – Eastern hemlock, white pine, red maple, and red oak – Randy went on to discuss the characteristics and habitats of more than 40 woody plants.



Mammals: The final walk of this season, in early October, was wildlife biologist Brad Timm's program on the mammals of Fitzgerald Lake. Knowing it was unlikely to actually see many mammals, Brad came prepared with a list of 30-plus species that could be expected to inhabit the conservation area, together with three pages of photos. About half of these animals, such as black bear, beaver, white-tailed deer, and porcupine, are well documented in the area, including by the BBC trail cam. The other half, including less easily observed species such as mice, voles, shrews, and up to eight different species of bats, are presumed to be present but don't typically catch a visitor's eye or trip the trail cam. Among the interesting facts that Brad discussed was that beavers constitute a keystone species, creating critical habitat for many other animals, and that the coyotes in the eastern U.S. are the largest in the country, having interbred with gray wolves as they expanded their range from west to east in the preceding century.

—Dave Pritchard

The BBC website (broadbrookcoalition.org) has a wealth of information about Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area. Please visit us to find upcoming events, learn about the history and ecology of FLCA, renew your membership, and much more.

Contact us by email at info@broadbrookcoalition.org, or write us at P.O. Box 60566, Florence, MA 01062.

Dave Herships is Retiring from the BBC Board



Broad Brook Coalition will lose a valuable board member when Dave Herships steps down in November. Dave has served on the board since 2009 and as Vice President since 2011. He played an active role on both the Trails and Stewardship Committees throughout his term of service. As chair of the Trails Committee, Dave was instrumental in designing and installing new signs and blazing on FLCA's network of trails. He feels that this project was his most significant contribution and the one that gave him the most satisfaction. He also oversaw the repair of deteriorating bog bridges and the addition of many new ones where trails had become difficult to negotiate during wet periods.

When taking on a new project, Dave would do extensive research into the available options and was resourceful in finding outside assistance once the work had begun. He recruited volunteers from the Hampshire County jail for the trail sign program and got help from the Boy Scouts with the bog bridge project. When it came time to replace the sagging bridge at the end of the North Farms Road entrance path, Dave was actively

involved in the planning and installation of the new bridge as well as with the repair and extension of the boardwalk.

Whether tending the shrub islands in Cooke's Pasture, installing riprap around the flow-through device at the dam, or removing invasive plants along the entrance paths, Dave rarely said no to a BBC work day. Away from the trails, he often represented BBC at City Council and Conservation Commission meetings, especially when issues such as hunting or unleashed dogs and dog waste were on the agenda. Having served on the Kestrel Land Trust board as well as BBC, Dave had a wide range of contacts and an invaluable knowledge of conservation efforts throughout the Valley.

After his retirement from the board, Dave will still be active doing volunteer work with BBC and other organizations.

Thanks for all your good work, Dave! We'll miss you.

CONSERVATION NEWS IN BRIEF

Dog Owner Alert

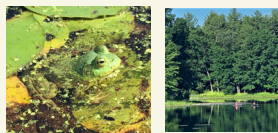


As we have stressed in previous newsletters, dogs are welcome at the FLCA as long as they are leashed and their owners pick up any waste (i.e., poop) that their dogs have deposited. To make the latter easier, we provide plastic bags for dog waste at several entrances and, as you may have noticed, we have recently placed trash cans at the North Farms Road and Cooke Avenue parking lots for dog waste bags as an experiment. **Please help us**

to make the FLCA a more pleasant place for those with and without dogs by keeping your dog(s) on leash and picking up dog waste and depositing it in the trash cans provided.

We're on Facebook and Instagram

Broad Brook Coalition is now on Facebook and Instagram, making it easy to stay up to date on what's happening at Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area throughout the year. Our goal is to provide members and other visitors with information that will enhance their experience of Northampton's largest conservation area. Board member Laura Beltran has been posting to these platforms since last spring, putting up photos and videos that educate about the natural history of FLCA, showcase its seasonal beauty, and give notice of upcoming programs and volunteer opportunities. The accompanying photos are a tiny sample of what you can find in BBC's posts. Make sure to follow us on Facebook (facebook.com/fitzgeraldlakeconservationarea) and Instagram (@[fitzgeraldlakeconservationarea](https://instagram.com/fitzgeraldlakeconservationarea))!



North Farms Road Entrance Improved

The North Farms Road entrance to the FLCA has undergone several improvements in the past year as part of the city's upgrade of North Farms Road. The parking lot has been resurfaced and a new culvert was installed under the paved path to carry drainage water from the road to the Broad Brook. Most recently, two sections of the blacktop path have been replaced with porous paving to avoid further damage to the roots of a large pine tree and to smooth the way to the boardwalk. The path is now much easier to navigate by visitors with disabilities and once again readily accessible by wheelchair.

Water Chestnut Project

Over the past five years, we have carried out an intensive campaign to remove water chestnut, an invasive aquatic plant that infests many local ponds and streams, from Fitzgerald Lake. Each summer, a flotilla of kayakers has gone out on the lake to pull the plant by hand at three-week intervals. Our yield this summer was 100 lbs., down from 1,100 lbs. in 2017, indicating that our efforts have made a significant dent in the water chestnut population. We hope to further curtail the presence of this plant in future years.

Species Spotlight

(This is the sixth 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: Coyote

Scientific Name: *Canis latrans* (Latin for barking/howling dog)

Physical Description: Coyotes are members of the dog family and share many characteristics of medium-sized dog breeds, though with thicker fur and bushier tail than most domestic dogs. Their coat is generally a combination of gray, brown, dark red, and white. Coyotes in the northeastern U.S. are noticeably larger than those in other parts of their range. Adults here are often 30-40 lbs but can average 1/3 smaller in southern Mexico and Central America.

Longevity: Coyotes typically live between 6-10 years in the wild but have been known to live up to 20 years in captivity.

Distribution: Coyotes currently range through all of the lower 48 states as well as much of Alaska; throughout much of southern, western, and northwestern Canada; and throughout Mexico, extending southward through most of Central America. Up through the 1700s or so their range was limited to central parts of the lower 48 states as well as south-central Canada and the northern 2/3rds of Mexico. However, since that time, and especially from the early 1900s onward, coyotes have dramatically expanded their range, largely due to the human-induced reduction or elimination of other large carnivores such as wolves and bears. Coyotes first arrived in Massachusetts around the 1950s and have been found in all towns in Massachusetts with the exception of those on Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket.

Habitat: They are found in a wide variety of forest and field environments and are highly adaptable, even being found in densely populated suburban/urban areas as long as there are at least small patches of woodland present.

Reproduction: Here in Massachusetts female coyotes give birth typically to 4-8 pups, often in April or May. Coyotes use dens for birthing and during the period while they are nursing the pups. They may dig the dens themselves or use a hollowed-out tree stump or an existing burrow made by other animals such as raccoons or skunks. Often a pair will have several dens within a given area to enable trading sites if one den gets fleas or parasites or is compromised by predators. The adult pair and pups of that year will often stay together until the pups disperse sometime in late autumn. Sometimes one sibling (a "helper sibling") from the previous litter will stay and help take care of the next one.



Prey: Coyotes are generalist predators, eating almost anything that is readily available, from small mammals such as rabbits or rodents to amphibians, reptiles, birds, deer, fruit, berries, and much more. They are very adaptable and will learn to scavenge roadkill as well as garbage and animal food left outside by humans.

Conservation and Management: Coyotes are widespread and quite abundant throughout their range, which continues to expand. Currently there are estimated to be up to 11,500 coyotes present in Massachusetts. In Massachusetts they are classified as a furbearer species and thus can be hunted with an appropriate hunting license.

Interesting Facts:

- Recent studies have shown that coyotes in the northeastern U.S. share ~25% of their DNA with wolves, as a result of hybridization with wolves through their range and during their expansion eastward over the past 100+ years.
- Coyotes use a wide variety of vocalizations (such as howling and yipping) and scent marking to define and defend their territory.
- Their territory (also known as a "home range") can vary anywhere from a couple square miles to 20+ square miles.

—Brad Timm



Two of the American chestnuts that were planted in Cooke's Pasture in 2017 are looking great and starting to outgrow their cages!

Broad Brook Coalition
P.O. Box 60566
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www.broadbrookcoalition.org

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Please complete this form and return it with a check to:

Broad Brook Coalition, P.O. Box 60566, Florence, MA 01062

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

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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 Membership)

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:

Board Member Trails Committee (maintenance and repair) Clerical

Stewardship Committee (includes invasive species removal) Land Preservation/Acquisition Committee

Occasional Work Days Education Outreach Newsletter writer Other (please specify) _____