# BROAD BROOK COALITION



Volume 33, Issue #1, Spring 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.

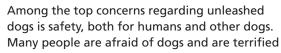
Our work in trail maintenance, stewardship, education, and land preservation to expand FLCA is funded by the generous support of our members and occasional grants.

#### **Good Dog Owners Make Good Dogs**

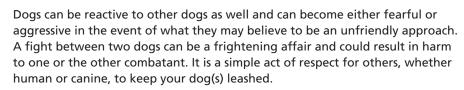
Who doesn't love dogs? Many of us have grown up with dogs and couldn't do without them whether they're herding dogs, tracking dogs, show dogs, hunting dogs, mixed-breed dogs, or simply loyal and unquestioning companions. The ways in which we interact with them on our home turf are up to us, but their behavior in public bears some thought. Poorly trained dogs can be a bother to others, unleashed dogs can endanger wildlife, and dog waste can be unsightly and harmful to the environment. For these reasons, cities and towns have established guidelines regulating their behavior when out and about, and their conduct in recreation areas is of particular concern.



Northampton and many other Massachusetts communities require that dogs be leashed when on public property with the exception of dog parks specifically designed for off-leash dogs. The same rule applies to parks administered by the Massachusetts Division of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). People often ask why this is so as most of us regard our dogs as well-behaved and under good control. Unfortunately, this is often not the case.

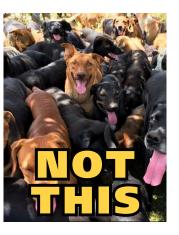


to see one coming at them at high speed and possibly even jumping up on them.



Picking up and removing dog waste is another caveat of happy dog-human interaction. There are probably very few of us who haven't inadvertently stepped into an odoriferous pile of dog poop. Ugh! But that isn't the half of it. Dog feces can cause significant environmental harm because they contain

"Many people are afraid of dogs and are terrified to see one coming at them at high speed and possibly even jumping up on them."





PLEASE KEEP YOUR
DOG LEASHED
AND PICK UP/PACK
OUT DOG WASTE
WHEN VISITING
NORTHAMPTON
CONSERVATION
AREAS!

bacteria such as *E. coli* as well as a variety of parasites, including giardia, heartworm, and hookworm. These organisms can infect wild animals if left on trails or in the woods. And when the runoff from dog waste reaches streams, lakes, and other waterways, it can cause pollution that leads to beach closures, fishing restrictions, and human disease. For these reasons, always clean up your dog's waste, carry it out, and dispose of it in an appropriate receptacle.

The Connecticut River Stormwater Committee, a coalition of 19 municipalities in western Massachusetts, estimates that the roughly 50,000 dogs in the Pioneer Valley generate over 17 tons of dog waste every day! Their Think Blue Connecticut River campaign invites dog owners to take the PUP (Pick Up the Poop) Pledge committing them to pick up dog waste, bag it, and dispose of it appropriately. You can take the PUP Pledge at https:// thinkblueconnecticutriver.org/petwaste-management. Similar "Scoop the Poop" programs have been adopted by many municipalities and regions throughout the country.

Off-leash dogs also pose serious hazards for wildlife. In fact, numerous

studies have shown that merely walking a dog along a forest trail onleash results in the avoidance of the neighboring habitat by birds and other wild animals at distances up to several hundred feet and for extended periods of time owing to the persistence of dog scent. Such disruptions interfere with foraging and reproduction, leading to greater stress. Off-leash, dogs can flush ground-nesting birds, exposing eggs and nestlings to predation, chase - and even kill -- small mammals, and trample sensitive native plants. These activities are contrary to the purposes of a conservation area.

BBC has recently published a brochure that describes the ways in which "Good Dog Owners Make Good Dogs." The brochure can be obtained by emailing a request to info@broadbrookcoalition.org or at dispensers located at the North Farms Road and Cooke Avenue entrances to the FLCA. Northampton Community Television has also produced a short video that explains why good dog behavior is important for all who enjoy the many open spaces that Northampton affords. The video can be viewed at https://www.youtube. com/watch?v=T8CYDpafoG8.

— Bob Zimmermann

# New Acquisition Adds 53 Acres to FLCA

On February 9 the City of Northampton closed on the purchase of the Wilbur property, the largest parcel of land to be added to Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area since the acquisition of the Broad Brook Gap parcel in 2013. The new property was purchased with a grant from the Community Preservation Committee, with an additional contribution from BBC's Land Acquisition & Stewardship Fund. The following article is adapted from a report that Laurie Sanders prepared last summer describing the natural and human history of this land. A link to the full report can be found on the BBC home page at broadbrookcoalition.org.

The acquisition of the 53-acre Wilbur property fills in another important piece of the complicated jigsaw puzzle of parcels that form the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area, the City's largest (more than 900 acres) and most visited conservation area. Bounded by Boggy Meadow Road on the northeast, this land is surrounded on its northern half by protected open space. To the south, the future use of the abutting parcels is mostly known: the Lathrop Community is fully built out and the land of St. Mary's Catholic cemetery is committed.

Most of the property is forested, rocky uplands, much of which was timbered during a 2018 shelterwood cut that created multiple small openings that are now succeeding into thickets. In addition, the property includes a wooded stream (Pine Brook), two areas with perched wetlands, and part of a beaver pond and shallow marsh. Collectively, these habitats support a higher-than-expected number of plant species, which in turn increase its animal diversity. In addition, the land's location, not far from the Connecticut River, heightens its value for migratory birds, and the property's position within a larger block of protected land makes it of greater value to wildlife with larger home ranges, e.g. bear, moose, bobcat, and forest specialists, like wood thrushes and scarlet tanagers.

On the northeast side of the property there is a small pool formed by a beaver dam across Pine Brook. A longer curving dam just upstream separates this pool from a much larger dead-tree marsh, which is readily visible from Boggy Meadow Road. A beaver deceiver was installed in both of these dams to regulate the water level. From there, Pine Brook flows almost due south, through the Lathrop property, under Cooke



The Wilbur property is located not far from the Connecticut River and within walking distance to Fitzgerald Lake.

Avenue and then through a culvert below the Big Y parking lot, Route 91, and the railroad tracks before emerging near the horseshoe bend in the Connecticut River.

Although the property lies outside of any Priority Habitat for Rare Species, it does include Critical Supporting Landscape (see the full report for maps delineating these habitats). Furthermore, this area provides habitat for many species in decline and also appears to include suitable habitat for the endangered Bush's sedge (Carex bushii). When it comes to management concerns, most of the property is free of invasive plants. Of the invasive species present, the most widespread is Asiatic bittersweet. Also included are multiflora rose, garlic mustard, Japanese barberry, and winged euonymus, along with smaller incursions of other less familiar species. The highest concentrations of invasive plants occur along Boggy Meadow Road and in the property's southeast corner,

near the boundary between the Lathrop property and the cemetery. Other occurrences are isolated and show up along the stream corridor, in the clearings created through the recent timber operation, and on some of the rocky knobs.

From a recreational standpoint, the protection of the property has multiple benefits. Perhaps most importantly, it ensures that Boggy Meadow Road will retain its sole status as a trail (vs. trail plus private driveway). There is already a short foot trail leading off Boggy Meadow Road with great views of the beaver pond, and additional trails could be established in accordance with best conservation practices to ensure the least disturbance to critical habitats. A final aspect of significance is this parcel's ownership history. At this point, the ownership records have been traced back to the mid-1800s and past owners include some of Northampton's most noteworthy residents.



The higher and larger of two beaver dams that impound Pine Brook just off Boggy Meadow Road.



One of two great blue heron nests observed in the large beaver pond on abutting City-owned conservation land. In 1993 this area was in private ownership and was a dense red maple swamp. Back in the 1800s it had been cleared and was a "boggy meadow". Times change!



A small cove of open water and shallow marsh on the Wilbur property.

The BBC website (<u>broadbrookcoalition.org</u>) 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.

BBC is pleased to be resuming our Walks and Talks programs beginning this spring. Due to the continuing coronavirus situation in western Mass., we will be limiting participation to 10 attendees (in addition to walk leaders), and require that all persons wear a mask and remain six feet apart.

To sign up for any of the following walks, please send an email to Dave Pritchard at Registrar.BroadBrookCoalition@gmail.com indicating how many people you will have in your party. We will accommodate as many attendees as we can on a first-come first-serve basis. Please check the Broad Brook website (broadbrookcoalition.org) for more information on any of these programs, or call Dave Pritchard (413-268-3668) or Dick Wynne (413-584-7930).

#### **Mid-Spring Bird Walk**

Laura Beltran

Sunday, May 2, 7:00–9:00 a.m. • Cooke Ave. entrance Laura Beltran, long-time birder and an educator at Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, will lead this bird walk along Boggy Meadow Road to the Fitzgerald Lake dam. In early May many boreal migrants are passing through our area, and residents and breeding migrants are establishing territories and beginning to nest. We will look and listen for warblers, thrushes, vireos, swallows, herons, and more. Bring binoculars.

#### **Spring Understory Walk**

Connie Parks

Sunday, May 9, 10:00–11:30 a.m. • North Farms entrance Join botanist Connie Parks for a ramble to Fitzgerald Lake on Mother's Day morning. May is the high season for spring ephemerals, wildflowers that are visible for short times before overstory trees leaf out. Dwarf ginseng, for example, is present above ground for only about 60 days per year. We'll use a plant list from May 11, 2013, to see if and how things have changed on the north shore. Proper footwear is advised, and thunder cancels.

Connie is a freelance editor and educator residing in Florence who remembers mudbiking the trails before there was a Broad Brook Coalition or FLCA.

#### **Learn Your Ferns**

Randy Stone

Saturday, June 26, 10:00–noon (rain date Sun. June 27) North Farms entrance

Ever wonder if you might be susceptible to fernophilia? Join Randy Stone of the Pioneer Valley Fern Society for a walk through the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area, finding common ferns and club mosses of our area. Learn the key features for easy identification of our "top 10" native ferns and maybe some uncommon ones too. Start creating a list of ferns of Fitzgerald Lake! Bring a hand lens if you have one. Wear clothing appropriate for possible encounters with poison ivy, insects including ticks, or muddy ground.

#### Mammals of Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area Brad Timm

Saturday, Oct. 2, 10:00 a.m.—noon • North Farms Rd. entrance Learn about the wide diversity of mammals that live throughout the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area in this morning hike. Join wildlife biologist Brad Timm, as we walk and visit some of the varied natural habitats that are important for different mammal species at FLCA and learn about the fascinating life histories of these animals. We'll keep our eyes open for any mammals we may come across during the walk, for evidence of the presence of specific mammals (e.g., tracks, feeding evidence, scat, etc.), and will even learn about some of the techniques used to track and monitor populations of different mammal species. All ages are welcome and encouraged!

#### **Book Review**

Swampwalker's Journal: A Wetlands Year David Carroll • Mariner Books 2001



This is one of my favorite nature books – one that I go back and browse through every year once winter starts to wind down. David Carroll is a writer and artist who has trained his talents on the natural world around him, in particular, the New England wetlands and their remarkable inhabitants. Swampwalker's Journal takes the reader on a tour of vernal pools, marshes, swamps, bogs, and floodplains, documenting their seasonal changes from ice-out

through the busy warm months to the hard freeze of the following winter. His writing combines rigorous scientific detail with rich descriptions of the land and creatures he has come to love over a lifetime of exploration. As he puts it in his introduction, looking back to a boyhood spent wading happily through wetlands, "Later science has done nothing to diminish earlier poetry; answers only

unlock questions, and specific knowledge only deepens the mystery of the earth's landscape and life." There are numerous elegant line drawings throughout the book (Carroll is a graduate of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts School), depicting such subjects as the detailed anatomy of a fairy shrimp and the mesmerizing communal congress (liebesspiel) of spotted salamanders. But for all the expertise and passion Carroll brings to Swampwalker's Journal, there is a note of elegy too, as he observes the fragmentation and outright destruction of many of the wetlands he has spent years observing. In a sobering epilogue, Carroll writes, "The depth of our anthropocentric behavior reveals the extent to which we think of ourselves as owning all living things, along with the very earth, air, and water in which they live . . . As we will learn in time, none of this belongs to us."

- 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.

# Lost - and Found - During a Pandemic Year

In a year that saw the closing of most local offices, schools, parks, and playgrounds, many people found a welcome outlet for their energies in Northampton's conservation areas, which thankfully remained open throughout the year. Judging by the overflow parking often observed at the North Farms Road and Cooke Ave. entrances, Fitzgerald Lake saw a significant increase in visitation this last year. But while people may have found valuable opportunities for exercise, recreation, and discovery in the great outdoors, they inevitably lost some items in the process. These photos document some of what was found - and lost - at FLCA this pandemic winter.

— Dave Pritchard





#### FACE MASKS AND DISTANCING WILL BE REQUIRED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

#### **Shrubland Habitat and Native Plants**

Saturday, May 1, 9:00 a.m.-noon

Several years ago, we established three 'islands' of native shrubs in Cooke's Pasture to provide food and habitat for shrubland birds and small mammals. We return every year to prune the shrubs, cut back competing undergrowth, and replace plants that have not survived the winter. Tools will be provided, though additional clippers are always welcome. Wear long pants and bring along your favorite insect repellent. Meet at the former Moose Lodge parking lot at the end of Cooke Avenue at 8:30 a.m. or at the Fitzgerald Lake dam at 9:00 a.m. Contact Dick Wynne at 584-7930.

### **Annual Cleanup at the North Farms Road Entrance**

Saturday, May 22, 10:00 a.m.-noon

Each year we devote one day in the spring to cleaning up the North Farms Road entrance to the FLCA, including clearing winter debris from the path to the bridge and boardwalk, picking up trash in the parking lot, and removing by hand invasive plants such as garlic mustard, Japanese knotweed, and multiflora rose in the adjoining woods. Please help us spruce up this heavily used route to the conservation area. Tools will be provided. Contact Brad Timm at 401-595-9934

#### Removal of Invasives on Boggy Meadow Road Sunday, June 27, 10:00 a.m. –1:00 p.m.

The margins of roads provide excellent habitat for the growth of invasive plants. We have surveyed and located many patches of invasives along Boggy Meadow Road, which connects the former Moose Lodge parking lot at the end of Cooke Avenue with the Fitzgerald Lake dam. We will work our way along the road, removing invasive plants such as multiflora rose, Asiatic bittersweet, Japanese barberry, autumn olive, and non-native honeysuckle by hand: pulling, cutting, and digging. Tools will be provided, but if you care to bring clippers, pruning saws, and lopping shears, it would be appreciated. And don't forget gloves, sunscreen, and insect repellent. Meet at the former Moose Lodge parking

# Construction of a New Trail on the Wilbur (aka Pine Brook) Property

Date(s) and time(s) to be announced.

lot. Contact Bill Williams at 585-9696.

Early this year, the city closed on the purchase of the 53-acre Wilbur property, located on the west side of Boggy Meadow Road between the Lathrop property and the beaver pond. We are in the process of laying out a trail on this tract that will take advantage of its unique ecological features, and we will start to construct the trail in late spring or summer. This is a joint project of the Trails and Stewardship Committees. Stay tuned for further information on the BBC website or by email.

#### **Removal of Water Chestnut from Fitzgerald Lake**

Saturdays, June 19, July 10, July 31, August 21, and September 18, 9:00 a.m.-noon

Four years ago we implemented a new approach to controlling water chestnut in Fitzgerald Lake called "pull early, pull often." In 2017, we removed roughly 1,100 lbs. from the lake but in 2018 the yield was down to 300 lbs. and even less in 2019 and 2020. Though we are pleased with the results so far, viable water chestnut seed can persist for up to ten years on the lake bottom, so we plan to continue our more aggressive approach once again this year. We'll organize crews in late May, begin pulling in mid-June, and continue at 3-week intervals throughout the summer. We will need volunteers with canoes or kayaks though we can always use the help of those who don't have their own boats. If interested, contact Bob Zimmermann by email (raz@umass.edu) or phone (585-0405) for further information or to volunteer.



## **Woodcock Ready for Its Closeup**

For most of us, if we're lucky enough to see a wood-cock at all, it's as a blur across the sky in the deep dusk as it performs its famous "sky dance." So it's a treat to watch this elusive bird in broad daylight as captured last summer by the BBC trailcam. Few things in the bird world are quite so comical as the up-and-down, back-and-forth pumping walk of the woodcock, on full display in this clip as it sidles up to the pool. Once there, it takes a vigorous bath that sends the drops flying. This and other videos can be viewed by visiting the BBC website at broadbrookcoalition.org and clicking on FLCA Trailcam under the Fitzgerald Lake tab. Thanks to Michael Kesten and other Trail Committee members for maintaining this informative and entertaining resource.

#### Laura Beltran



Laura Beltran spent hours of her childhood immersed in an imaginative world she and her friends created while playing outdoors. Instead of using toys or electronic gadgets, they used their senses and their minds, and they were not overscheduled to make every soccer game or piano recital. Laura went on to pursue degrees in environmental

biology at St. Lawrence University in New York and University of Wisconsin in Madison. She began her career in environmental education at a small nature center in Rye, New York. "I wasn't looking for a job in teaching at all," says Laura. "I ended up loving it, and I really enjoy working with children because of their enthusiasm." So for over three decades, Laura has interpreted natural history to people of all ages, for nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and for-profit businesses. She is currently a teacher / naturalist at Mass Audubon's Arcadia sanctuary and a member of the Education Committee at Hampshire Bird Club.

#### **Beth Powell**



Beth Powell lives in Hatfield with her two dogs, a chocolate lab mix and an Alaskan klee kai. She has taught psychology and neuroscience at Smith College for 40 years. Favorite activities include swimming,

hiking, snowshoeing, and gardening. She has volunteered for AMC trail work crews for the past few years, working at Cardigan Mountain and Echo Lake in Acadia. It was a pleasant surprise when she learned about the existence of the Fitzgerald Lake area, just half a mile from her house. Since then she has been active on the trail crew helping paint signs and blazes, digging out wet areas, and removing storm debris from trails. Her only regret is that she did not discover this beautiful area years ago.

# **CONSERVATION NEWS IN BRIEF**

#### **Newsletter Delivery Policy Is Changing**

Our major source of communication with our members is our biannual newsletter. We are happy to share it by mailing a paper copy or emailing a link, whichever you prefer. In the interests of saving resources, we will ask that you specifically request a paper copy by checking a box on next year's membership renewal form. You can also let us know your delivery preference by mail or email. The new policy will take effect for the Spring 2022 issue. If we do not have an email address, we will continue to mail a paper copy to you. We are grateful to our members!

#### **Trails Committee Report - Volunteer Needed**

This past year BBC volunteers on the Trails Committee primarily focused on regular trail maintenance – clearing fallen trees, rebalancing bog bridges, re-staining and installing springs on trail signs, mitigating trail erosion, picking up garbage, restocking the trail map and mutt mitt dispensers, and removing the occasional graffiti. In addition, Michael Kesten has been monitoring the trailcam at various sites in FLCA and uploading videos to the BBC website. We depend on seven Trail Stewards to help us keep over eight miles of trails in good shape. These people agree for one year to walk their assigned trail every 3-4 weeks, pick up trash and branches, clip tree limbs extending over the trail, report downed trees, and make trail improvement suggestions. We presently have one opening for this position. If you are interested in volunteering to be a Trail Steward and/or to help us clear new trails and build bog bridges in the newly acquired Wilbur parcel this spring, please contact Jim Reis at reis13@comcast.net.

#### **Thanks to Our Intrepid Volunteers!**

Covid was not enough to stem the enthusiasm of our intrepid volunteers who worked to improve the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area and Beaver Brook Greenway for the enjoyment of hikers, boaters, and all who sought an hour or two of respite from the pandemic. Our thanks go to those who kept trails cleared and blazed, pulled and dug invasive plants, tended native shrubs and trees, served as trail stewards, and took on many other tasks to maintain the FLCA and BBG in good shape:

David Arbeitman, Susan Carmichael, Hilary Caws-Elwit, Peter Flinker, Yvonne Freccero, Brigid Glacken, Steve Harding, Bruce Hart, Leana Hart, Diego Irrazary-Gerould, Yamila Irrazary-Gerould, Colleen Isabelle, Deb Jacobs, Jason Johnson, Patricia Jung, Michael Kesten, George Kohout, Mike Murphy, Rachael Naismith, Brian Pamaylaon, Jeannette Pamaylaon, Beth Powell, Jim Reis, Norma Roche, Chris Schmidt, Jon Steinberg, Heidi Stevens, and Matt Verson.



Hemlock with Woolly Adelgid Eggs

## **Species Spotlight**

(This is the fifth 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: Eastern Hemlock

**Scientific Name:** *Tsuga canadensis* ("Tsuga" is Latin derived from the Japanese word for "hemlock" and "canadensis" is a reference to its distribution throughout portions of southeastern Canada)

**Physical Description:** Eastern hemlocks are evergreen, coniferous trees that when full grown can reach heights of 100 feet and, in exceptional cases, upwards of 150 feet. The trunk is usually straight and rarely forks. Its flat, short needles are dark green above and silvery below, and its small brown cones hang from the ends of the branches. Large, mature Eastern hemlocks can measure up to ~6 feet wide toward the base of the tree.

**Longevity:** These slow-growing trees are among the longest-lived species in our Massachusetts forests, often living several hundred years with the potential to live for 800+ years!

**Distribution:** Eastern hemlocks are only native to North America, where their range extends from northeastern Minnesota eastward through southeastern Canada and southward throughout the Appalachian Mountains and into northern Georgia and Alabama.

**Habitat:** Here in the northeastern U.S. Eastern hemlocks tend to be found in areas of shallow, moist soils underlain by bedrock, though exceptions to this are not uncommon.

**Conservation and Management:** Eastern hemlocks are severely threatened by the hemlock woolly adelgid (see photo of the eggs above), an insect from eastern Asia that

was accidentally introduced to the U.S. in the early to mid 1900s. The woolly adelgid feeds on the hemlock sap and disrupts the flow of nutrients to twigs and needles. The health of the tree declines as a result, and infestation by adelgids may cause death within 10 years. This has resulted in widespread declines of Eastern hemlocks throughout their range, more so in the southern portion of their range currently, though increasingly here in the northern portion as well. This is an issue of serious conservation concern and has been the subject of ongoing research and management efforts by many organizations, principally the U.S. Forest Service. If you notice woolly adelgid eggs on a hemlock at the FLCA, please send a photo and a description of its location to info@broadbrookcoalition.org.

#### **Interesting Facts:**

- The Eastern hemlock is one of the most shade-tolerant tree species, and individuals can stay in the understory (i.e., below the canopy of other trees) for hundreds of years. Some hemlocks that are under a dense canopy may only be 2-3 inches thick, but could be 100-200 years old!
- Eastern hemlock lumber has a wide variety of construction purposes and is also used to make crates, pallets, and railroad ties; the wood pulp is commonly used to make newspaper and wrapping paper.
- Native Americans and early settlers from Europe made tea from hemlock needles which is very high in vitamin C, and early European settlers used its branches as brooms.

- Brad Timm

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

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