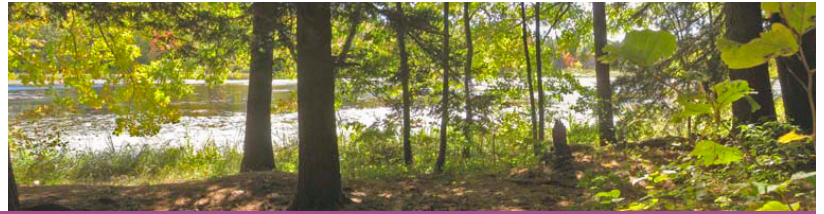


BROAD BROOK COALITION



www.broadbrookcoalition.org

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2022-2023

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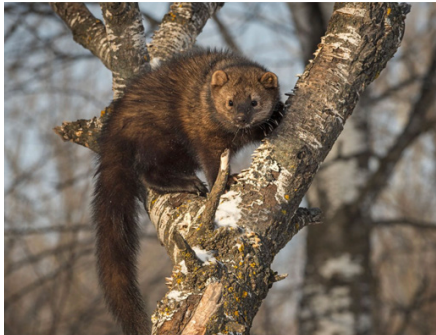
ABOUT US

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.

Trail Committee Report PAGE 3 • FLCA Social Media PAGE 5

President's Message: An Abundance of Wildlife at the FLCA



Fisher



Bobcat

While a deer catches your eye as it runs through the woods or a black bear focuses your attention as it ambles through the brush, many of the mammals that inhabit the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area are seen far less often, particularly because many of them forage at dusk or at night. Nonetheless, occasional sightings and trail camera videos testify to a rich assortment of animals that make their home in the conservation area. A few years ago, Virginia Sowers, an undergraduate student in Natural Resource Conservation at the University of Massachusetts, placed nine trail cameras at a variety of different locations in the FLCA and recorded over a dozen species of mammals from deer to deer mice. More recently, BBC's Michael Kesten has captured action videos of several of these, including coyotes, raccoons, bears, and bobcats (and a variety of birds) that can be

viewed on the BBC web site at <https://www.broadbrookcoalition.org/flca-trailcam/>.

Although sightings are among the most satisfying ways of detecting animals in their natural habitats, their presence can be revealed in several other ways as well. Animal tracks are quite revealing as many mammals leave characteristic footprints, which are often easy to find in winter when there's snow on the ground. Vocalizations are another source of information, whether it's the yelping of coyotes or the unearthly scream of the red fox at night. Many animals have preferred habitats that can provide a key to their identity. There's even a guide book devoted to animal scat which can provide telltale clues as well. (As it happens, BBC board member Brad Timm is leading a habitat walk at FLCA this June, as described on p.4)

Here are a few examples of signs that can tip you off to the presence of wildlife when you're out and about in the conservation area.

BEAVERS are often seen swimming in the lake with only their heads showing and sometimes confirm their presence with a loud slap of their tails as they patrol their territory. Their lodges are also a dead giveaway; Fitzgerald Lake and the marsh below the dam are the sites of several of them. Another sign is the caching of freshly cut hardwood saplings in the water close to their lodges that serve as ladders they can access under the ice during the winter.

continued from page 2

PORCUPINES retreat to openings in rocky ledges in colder weather, subsisting on twigs, bark, and buds of nearby conifers. Den sites can be recognized by the browsed, flat tops of stunted hemlocks nearby, as well as piles of twig litter, droppings, and quills. Though their legs are short, porcupines are good tree climbers. I once heard an unfamiliar wailing in the woods and tracked it down to a pair of amorous porcupines perched in the branches of a large sugar maple.

The **VIRGINIA OPOSSUM**, the only marsupial native to New England, moved into our area from the south and central U.S. 100 years ago. They are primarily woodland creatures and are very adaptable: they can be found in almost any habitat that provides shelter, their diet is eclectic, and they often turn up in areas frequented by humans. Their tracks are unique, however, with front toes splayed in a star shape and their hind feet equipped with an opposable "thumb" that extends toward the inside of the track.

FISHERS, members of the weasel family, are generally solitary and spend more time in trees than on the ground, where they are well camouflaged and difficult to see. They are one of the very few animals that prey on porcupines in addition to many other small mammals. Fishers have several track patterns and one that is fairly easy to distinguish in the snow consists of randomly alternating groups of three or four paw prints; in the former case, two of the prints are superimposed.

EASTERN COYOTES are thought to have bred with wolves as they migrated eastward from the central U.S., arriving in Massachusetts only in the late 1950s. Today, they occupy a broad range of habitats from forest and fields to our backyards as they tend to be quite comfortable around humans. The prolonged howls and yips of coyotes that can be heard in the evening -- believed to call pack members to reassemble after they have dispersed for hunting -- are unmistakable. A severed deer head can mark the site of a kill.



River Otter

BOBCATS are typically solitary and secretive, and even hunt in a stealthy manner. They are largely silent although they have been reported to hiss, growl, or scream under certain circumstances. Bobcat tracks are similar to those of house cats but, in the snow, they can sometimes be observed along the tops of fallen trees where house cats are unlikely to go. The pungent smell of their urine on tree stumps or leaf piles can also signal their presence.

RIVER OTTERS can be seen swimming together in the lake, bobbing along with only their heads above water. Their partially webbed feet are well adapted to a life in or near water bodies where they catch their preferred prey: fish. While on land -- especially in the snow -- their tracks are sometimes set off by a significant tail drag. Otters are very social and appear to enjoy life. One sure sign is the mud, grass, or snow slides they build on steep slopes next to streams or lakes, which, as far as we know, they use for play.

The **RED FOX** occupies a variety of habitats from forests to pastures and subsists on prey that ranges from reptiles and small mammals to fruit and berries. Its many different vocalizations include howls, yips, and screams that are delivered at a pitch well above those of other canids like coyotes and dogs. The footprints of a trotting red fox, which result from an almost precise superimposition of the hind feet on the prints of the corresponding forefeet, fall



Red Fox

in an almost straight line at an interval of one to one-and-a-half feet, quite different from the sloppy, wandering prints left by a small dog.

RED SQUIRRELS, which are ubiquitous in the forest, prefer conifers in contrast to gray squirrels which favor hardwoods. Active in daytime as they scramble up and down tree trunks and along branches, their noisy, staccato chatter is easy to recognize. While they feed on nuts, leaf buds, fruit, flowers, and even birds' eggs, their presence can often be detected by middens -- piles of pine or hemlock cones from which they have extracted the seeds. In the winter, they also tunnel through the snow, popping up to leave a one-way track away from the hole.

Moral of the story: A sharp eye and a little luck can help you appreciate the abundance of wildlife in the forests, fields, and waterways of the FLCA. Enjoy!

—Bob Zimmermann

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.

Trail Committee Report

Before we explain what we do and what projects we've been working on, we want to acknowledge and appreciate all the hard work by the many trails volunteers since 1988. Hauling all that heavy lumber and building the many bog bridges, moving large rocks as stepping stones in muddy areas, constructing the wildlife blind and boardwalk, and clearing all the trails in FLCA was a herculean job!! We also want to recognize Dave Hershops, a longtime board member and the first organizer of the Trails Committee a number of years ago. Under his leadership many projects were completed, including planning, constructing, and installing all the trail signs with the help of many volunteers, and suggesting we recruit trail stewards. The stewards "adopt" a specific trail for a year and commit to walking the trail every three to four weeks to trim branches, pick up trash, and inform the Trails Committee of fallen trees or large branches blocking the trail and of graffiti that needs to be removed. We currently have 8 stewards who cover all 10 miles of the trails.

The primary work we do is clear the trails of fallen trees and large branches. Each of us has a chainsaw, and we average clearing around 15 trees a year. Most of this work is straightforward. However, we are sometimes challenged by the "leaners" – those trunks angled off the ground that require ropes and very careful cutting to handle them safely. When we find one that is too dangerous for us we contact the city to have either DPW or a contractor remove it.

We also move BBC's trailcam around to different spots around FLCA, and have been able to get a number of interesting videos of the many animals that live there. We have found that placing the cam near a small pond or stream is the best place to capture these videos. These are then uploaded to the BBC's YouTube Channel which you can find on the BBC website. If you haven't seen them yet there are a number of really good ones – a pack of coyotes, an owl bathing, foxes, porcupine, raccoons, woodcock,

beavers, many bobcats, and of course many deer and bear including a mother and a very cute cub dining on skunk cabbage.

Another job we do each year is to repair bog bridges, and add more when needed. While sections of the trails are muddy after periods of rain, we only add new ones when a section is consistently wet for three months or so.

The last couple of years we have spent a good amount of time installing springs behind the 42 trail signs to prevent tree growth from damaging them by pulling the screws through them. Every couple of years we still need to loosen the bolts, as well as re-stain the signs and re-paint the letters.

We've recently added several rustic benches, including one on the Fishing Place Trail, another at the Pine Brook Trail, and later this spring we'll add one at the end of the Narrows Trail.

A couple of years ago we cleared and added bog bridges to the new and scenic Pine Brook Trail in the newly acquired Wilbur parcel off of Boggy Meadow Rd.

Our other duties include re-filling the 3 mutt mitt dispensers, the 5 map brochure dispensers, improving trail drainage, maintaining the kiosks, re-blazing trails as needed, cleaning up homeless encampments, and removing graffiti. Most of our work requires only the three of us, although there are a number of projects each year that require more volunteers, so please check the "Trails" volunteer box when you renew your BBC membership if interested, and email reis13@comcast.net if you'd like to become a Trail Steward.

The three of us really enjoy working together and with all the other volunteers, and most often have a fun time doing the work. Lastly we thank those many volunteers who assist us, and the BBC Board of Directors who provide us with any needed equipment and supplies.

—Jim Reis, Steve Harding,
Michael Kesten



Clearing the boardwalk after a heavy wet snow



A fallen tree at the Fishing Place



*Trails Committee Gothic,
with Steve Harding and Michael Kesten*



The decrepit Moose Lodge was finally demolished by the city last fall. Four units of affordable housing will take its place.

2023 Walks and Talks

BBC has resumed a full schedule of Walks and Talks this year. We will not be limiting attendance, but we ask that you continue to register for each walk beforehand. This will allow us to answer any questions you might have and notify you of any changes or cancellations. To sign up for any of the following walks, please send an email to Dave Pritchard at Registrar.BroadBrookCoalition@gmail.com. Please check the Broad Brook website (broadbrookcoalition.org) for more information on any of these programs, or call Dave Pritchard (413-695-8442) or Dick Wynne (413-584-7930).

Spring Bird Walk

Lesley Farlow and Steve Winn

Saturday, April 29, 7:00 – 9:00 a.m.

Cooke Ave. entrance

Lesley Farlow and Steve Winn, experienced birders and members of the Hampshire Bird Club, will lead a bird walk along Boggy Meadow Rd. to the Fitzgerald Lake dam. We will look for returning migrants and resident birds as we pass through a number of different habitats. We should be able to see and hear some warblers, thrushes, vireos, swallows, herons, kingfishers, and more. Bring binoculars if you have them. We may have a few extra pairs.



Wildlife Habitats at FLCA

Brad Timm

Sunday, May 7, 10:00 a.m. – noon

Cooke Ave. entrance

Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area has a wide diversity of habitats which are used by the many wildlife species present at FLCA. Wetlands of a variety of types, forests, and early-successional patches are just some examples, and wildlife habitat can even be defined at a much finer scale, such as decaying logs on the forest floor that are used by salamanders. Some wildlife species even create habitat for themselves and for other species. Take a walk in the woods with wildlife biologist Brad Timm to learn about this diversity, while we also look for the wildlife that inhabit these areas and how we can identify their use of these habitats. All ages are welcome and encouraged!

Shrubs, Lichens, and Plants of the Forest Floor

Molly Hale

Sunday, June 4, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

North Farms Rd. entrance

Come learn about the plants we see at eye level and at our feet. We'll see hazelnuts, musclewood, hop hornbeam, trilliums, clubmosses, wild sarsaparilla, enchanter's nightshade and lots more! Plus we'll peek into the world of lichens, which are found growing on trees, soil, and rocks. This will be a slow 2- hour walk starting at the North Farms Road entrance. We will not be focusing on ferns because these are the subject of a walk on June 24 with Randy Stone. Molly Hale is a conservation ecologist who loves to share her enthusiasm for natural history with others.

Learn Your Ferns

Randy Stone

Saturday, June 24, 10:00 a.m. – noon (rain date Sun. June 25)

North Farms Rd. 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.



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New BBC Board Member: Rich Baker

Rich grew up on the coast north of Boston and learned early on to love and study the natural world around him. He started college at UMass Amherst in botany and ecology, and finished his studies with a M.S. in wildlife biology from Cornell University. During those years, he also worked as naturalist at Acadia National Park and as a trail crew foreman in the North Cascade mountains. After working as a science manager for the National Park Service in California, he spent 32 years managing species diversity for Minnesota's Department of Natural Resources, including 20 years as the state's Endangered Species Coordinator. His conservation work covered all sorts of animals, from mussels and monarchs to loons and lynx.



Rich retired in 2019, and last May he and his wife Rebekah moved to a home next to the North Farms Road entrance to the FLCA, where they enjoy daily dog walks in the conservation area. Rich is looking forward to relearning the plants and wildlife he once knew, and is enjoying observing the natural cycles and patterns of our beautiful area. Rich is so grateful for the opportunity to get to know the area and participate in the FLCA.

Fitzgerald Lake Social Media

Broad Brook Coalition is reaching those interested in Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area through social media, using both Instagram and Facebook. We share photos and videos that portray seasonal change, flora and fauna identification, and programs and work days that are happening at Fitzgerald Lake. You may follow us on Instagram: [#fitzgeraldlakeconservationarea](#) and Facebook: Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area. The following photos are taken from recent social media postings throughout the year. We hope you enjoy staying in touch with what's happening in the conservation area, and that you'll share our posts with friends. Do you have a question or comment for us? We'd love to hear from you!





Mushrooms in the Woodland Ecosystem

Peter Russell
Saturday, Sept. 9,
10:00 a.m. – noon
North Farms Rd. entrance



Mushrooms are an essential component of our Woodland ecosystems, yet much of their taxonomy and diversity remains undescribed even in sites such as Fitzgerald Lake. A lot of such recording is nowadays performed by citizen scientists and amateurs. Take a walk in the woods to learn about this diversity, how to recognize some of the major groups of fungi, and the roles played by mushrooms in the Woodland ecosystem. Collecting edible mushrooms will not be the focus of this walk. Peter is a local resident, a member of the Pioneer Valley Mycological Society, and has been leading mushroom forays for many years.

Beavers at Sundown

Laura Beltran
Saturday, October 21,
5 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
North Farms Road entrance



Discover the natural history of beavers, how they alter the landscape and provide habitat for other wildlife on this walk at Fitzgerald Lake. Evening is the ideal time to observe beavers, and if we're lucky, we'll see them. We'll meet at the North Farms Road entrance and walk about 3/4 mile searching for signs of beavers. All ages welcome. Binoculars and shoes for wet, muddy conditions are recommended. The trails also have lots of roots and rocks to step over. Laura Beltran is a teacher/naturalist at Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary in Easthampton.

Insect Tracks and Signs

Charley Eiseman
Saturday, Sept. 16,
1:00 – 3:00 p.m.
(rain date Sun. 9/22)
North Farms Rd. entrance

Insects are extremely specialized in their habits, and because of this it is often possible to learn which ones are around us just by noticing the characteristic patterns and objects they create as they go about their lives. Participants will search for signs such as egg cases, cocoons, webs, burrows, droppings, galls, leaf mines, and the various ways insects nibble, fold, roll, and tie leaves. Learning about insects through studying these signs will give participants a new appreciation for their complexity, diversity, and interrelationships with other living things. Charley is a freelance naturalist based in western Massachusetts and conducts plant and wildlife surveys throughout New England. He is the lead author of the field guide *Tracks & Sign of Insects and Other Invertebrates* and writes an insect-themed blog, "BugTracks."

Workdays at the FLCA: Spring and Summer 2023

Shrubland Habitat and Native Plants

Saturday, May 6,
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.

Removal of Invasives on Boggy Meadow Road

Sunday, June 25,
10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

The margins of roads provide excellent habitat for the growth of invasive plants. We have 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 lot. Contact Bob Zimmermann by email (raz@umass.edu) or phone (585-0405) if you'd like to help out.

Annual Cleanup at the North Farms Road Entrance

Saturday, May 20,
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 for further information

Removal of Water Chestnut from Fitzgerald Lake

Saturdays, 6/17, 7/8, 7/29,
8/19, & 9/16,
9:00 a.m. – noon

Six 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 while in 2022 the yield was down to 140 lbs. 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 "pull early, pull often" approach again this year. We'll organize crews in late May, begin pulling in mid-June, and continue at 3-week intervals throughout the summer. Volunteers should bring their own canoes or kayaks. If interested, contact Bob Zimmermann by email (raz@umass.edu) or phone (585-0405) for further information or to volunteer.

Book Pick

The Fungi of Laurel Park
Peter Russell • 2022

It's not every day you find a book that explores the natural world literally in your own back yard, or in this case, what you might call the back yard to the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area. Peter Russell moved to Laurel Park, just east of the FLCA, shortly before the pandemic, and as a mycologist he was struck by the variety and abundance of mushrooms he noticed growing there. One reason for this is that, while the park is small, it has many large mature trees, some of which date to before the park's founding in 1872. Different fungi are associated with mature trees than with younger ones, making Laurel Park an ideal site to observe species not as readily found elsewhere. Over three years, from 2020 to 2022, Peter photographed as many fruiting fungi as he could find within the park boundary, and the result is this remarkable book of hyperlocal natural history. After briefly sketching the history of Laurel Park itself, the book describes the trees that are found there, their fungal associations, and the general edibility and toxicity of the types of mushrooms that are present. Further chapters are broken into detailed sections on mycorrhizal and saprotrophic fungi as well as those that occupy other niches, with each section richly illustrated with Peter's full-color photographs. In all, he has documented more than 170 species in this small site. Peter will lead a mushroom walk for Broad Brook Coalition on Saturday, September 9, and though the walk will be in the conservation area, not Laurel Park, many of the same species will likely be found.



—Dave Pritchard

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

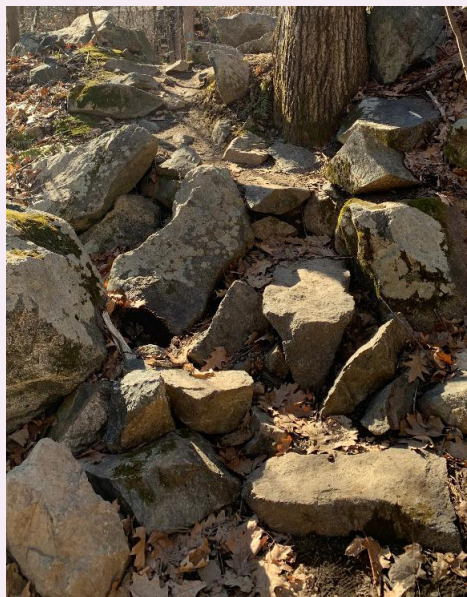
CONSERVATION NEWS IN BRIEF

STONE STEPS AT MARIAN ST. ENTRANCE REPAIRED

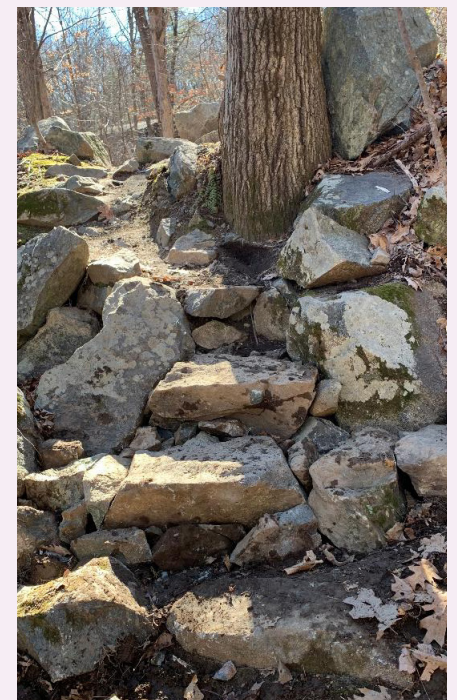
Anyone visiting FLCA from the Marian St. entrance in recent years is no doubt aware that the stone steps leading from the parking lot were treacherous to navigate. We are happy to report that in February BBC hired stonemason Patrick Sephton to fix them, as shown in these before-and-after photographs. Nice work, Patrick!

JOIN A COMMUNITY SCIENCE PROJECT AT FLCA

Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area has its own iNaturalist project, and currently, the project has over 1,000 observations of over 500 species. You can join this community project by getting the iNaturalist app (free) on your phone, taking photos of species while at Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area, and sharing them on the app. Your observations will automatically become part of the FLCA project. For more information about iNaturalist and this project, go to the website at www.iNaturalist.org and click on Community, then Projects, and search for "Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area" in the dialog box.



Before



After

Species Spotlight

(This is the ninth 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:

American Black Bear

Scientific

Name: *Ursus americanus*

("Ursus" is Latin for "bear" and "americanus" is Latin for "from America")

Physical

Description:

The American Black Bear is black with a brown muzzle and sometimes a white chest patch. They have large and padded feet with curved claws. Males ("boars")

weigh typically between 125-600 pounds and

females ("sows") typically between 100-400 pounds.

Longevity: Black Bears typically live ~18-20 years in the wild; the oldest recorded wild individual was known to live to 39 years old.

Distribution: American Black Bears were historically found in forested areas throughout the continental U.S., Canada, and Alaska (except in extreme Arctic areas), as well as northern Mexico. Their U.S. range was reduced due to human persecution over the last several hundred years, though in recent decades they have been expanding. Currently in the U.S. they inhabit much of northern and southwestern New England, into New York State and extending southward throughout the Appalachians. There are also various populations throughout a number of scattered regions in other portions of the eastern U.S. and a more substantial and connected range in heavily forested areas of the western U.S.

Habitat: Black Bears are found most frequently in forested areas, especially where there are wetlands nearby. They also are readily and increasingly found in suburban areas where they have learned to access easily attainable food sources such as seed from bird feeders and garbage from unsecured garbage cans and dumpsters.



Reproduction: An adult female will most commonly have 2-3 cubs in a litter and will typically have a litter every other year. The mother births her cubs in winter in a den, often in a brush pile, under fallen trees, in mountain laurel thickets, or in large rock crevices. The cubs will stay with her for ~18 months, after which they will go off and live on their own.

Conservation and Management: American Black Bears are now widespread throughout much of New England, and populations are beginning to increase now that the pressure from hunting and trapping has been reduced. Populations in New England today are believed to be at their highest levels since widespread European settlement throughout the region 200+ years ago.

Because Black Bears become readily accustomed to accessible unnatural food sources, residents should consider removing bird feeders if they have been visited by Black Bears and also be sure to secure household trash.

Interesting Facts:

- During hibernation their heart rate and metabolism drop by ~75% and they can lose upwards of 25% of their body weight as they use up stored fat.
- Black Bears are great climbers and scale trees to escape perceived threats, to protect their young, and to rest.
- Cubs are less than 1 pound when born and are roughly the size of a chipmunk.

—Brad Timm

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\$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) _____