



Citizens for Lexington Conservation

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<http://www.clclex.org>

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Kate Fricker, Editor April, 2009 Eileen

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Citizens for Lexington Conservation is a non-profit organization that relies on dues paid by members to cover its expenses. Look at your mailing label to check your membership status. If it says "Dues paid 2009," you are up to date. If it says "Dues paid 2008" (or earlier), then it is time to renew your membership for 2009. If it says "Complimentary Copy," you are receiving a complimentary copy of our newsletter because you are a Town Meeting member or other public official in Lexington. We hope that those who receive complimentary copies will find our organization of value and will become dues-paying members. To join CLC or renew your membership, please send \$15.00 to CLC, P.O. Box 292, Lexington, MA 02420-0003.

There is an electronic version of the CLC newsletter, sent as a link to the newsletter by e-mail. The e-mail version of the newsletter has illustrations in color and live links, it arrives much sooner than the snail mail version, it saves paper, and it costs CLC about \$1 less per copy. If you are currently receiving your newsletter by snail mail, but would like to get it by e-mail, contact Kate Fricker at kfricker@alum.swarthmore.edu.

CLC Publications

Over the years CLC has encouraged members to write guides to the open spaces in Lexington. These guides have been scanned and are available at no charge on our web site, <http://www.clclex.org/>. You may also use the web site to contact us about conservation-related happenings or sightings of unusual birds and wildlife that we can use on our web site and in our newsletter.

Thank you, Fall Walk Leaders

Many thanks to the leaders of our fall walks: Keith Ohmart, Mike Tabaczynski, Don Miller, Boot Boutwell, and Chris Floyd.

New Guidelines for Certifying Vernal Pools

By Kate Fricker

The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program has changed the rules for certification of vernal pools, starting in 2009. With almost no warning it has made it harder to protect them from development.

Normally the groundwork for certifying vernal pools is done in the spring, when frog and salamander eggs can easily be located and photographed, but sometimes it is necessary to do the work at another time of year. The new certification guidelines established by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (a program largely supported by taxpayers who check off a donation to protect wildlife when they file their state income tax) require photographs of five frog masses instead of two, and limit the number of species that can be used as proof of a vernal pool to ones found mainly only during the short spring wet season. The regulations also contain a warning about trespassing without explaining that landowner permission is only required when the land is posted. This warning might thus cause nervous volunteers to stop their certification efforts.

The revisions do call for an appeal process. Hopefully there will be a public notice and a comment period, so interested citizens can have an input into any future changes in the regulations.



Citizens for Lexington Conservation Spring Walks 2009

Bird Walks at Dunback Meadow Saturday April 18, 7-9 a.m. and Wednesday, May 7th, 6:30-8:30 a.m.

Dunback Meadow is probably the single best birding spot in Lexington due to its large size and wide range of habitats drawing birders from all over the region. Co-sponsored by the Brookline Bird Club and the Menotomy Bird Club. All levels of birders, including beginners and children, are welcome. Meet at the Allen St. entrance to Dunback Meadow.

Leader Bobbie Hodson hodsonkorn@rcn.com

Spring at Infinity Pond Sunday, April 26, 2-4 p.m.

Join local entomologist Maria Aliberti Lubertazzi for a survey of the area's aquatic life. Dragonflies and many other insects can be found as larvae in the ponds at Arlington's Great Meadows. Magnifiers, kitchen strainers and a camera would all come in handy. Co-sponsored by Cambridge Entomological Club and Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows.

Meet in the parking lot behind the Golden Living Center off Bryant Street.

Leaders: Maria Aliberti Lubertazzi, Andrea Golden andgold@comcast.net

Cancelled in case of rain

Garlic Mustard Day at Lincoln Park Saturday, May 2, 1-3 p.m.

This sneaky invasive biennial, with its distinctive white flowers, will be the object of our annual work day. *Allium petiolata* is one of the top 10 invasives in Lexington. It muscles out a host of woodland wildflowers such as jack in the pulpit, trillium, wild ginger, anemone, lady slipper, etc. It will be in its most distinctive phase (white flowers) in early May. Bring a black plastic bag, and digging tool (dandelion digger is useful). We will provide native seed like Wreath Goldenrod to plant in the empty space. The Lincoln Park Committee welcomes students who need to earn community or environmental service hours. We will also introduce you to a new invasive perennial, which grows in similar habitat: Cardamine impatiens or bittercress. A key element in eradicating garlic mustard is to return annually to the same spot(s) to catch seedlings that have sprouted from dormant seeds, and the CLC has been dedicating its efforts to this area for the last several years with observable results.

Meet at Worthen Road bike path entrance across from High School Football field.

Leader: Nell Walker nelwalk@earthlink.net 781-862-6943

Landscape Improvements Tour at Lincoln Park Saturday May 9, 1-3 p.m.

In 2008 The Lincoln Park Committee hired Wirth Associates to provide a staged plan for installation of extensive native plantings of shrubs and trees. In addition, the N.E. Wildflower Society began carrying out a plan to control the invasive species problems in the woodland and meadow areas. Join a tour to see how this dual program has progressed.

Meet at the Lincoln Street parking area across the street from Temple Isaiah.

Leader: Nell Walker nelwalk@earthlink.net 781-862-6943

Fern Walk at Whipple Hill Saturday, May 16, 2-4 p.m.

We will find and identify the ferns of Whipple Hill, using the 2005 edition of Peterson's Field Guide to Ferns. Then we will update CLC's old publication, "Ferns of Whipple Hill", which can be downloaded from CLC's web site, <http://www.lexingtonma.org/clc/Publications/Ferns.PDF>. Bring a print-out with you if possible.

Meet at the small Whipple Hill parking lot just past the high point on Winchester Drive. Leader: Kate Fricker kfricker@alum.swarthmore.edu

Spiders at Willards Woods

June 14, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Join us to look for spiders and other arthropods in Willards Woods. The varied habitats available, including meadow, wetlands, and forest, usually host a diverse array of spiders, from charismatic jumping spiders to orb-weaving spiders. Location – We'll meet at the Brent Road entrance to Willards Woods. Long pants are suggested as well as boots if it is soggy. A magnifying glass can be useful.

Trip Leader: Ned Eisner

Edward.eisner@verizon.net



Summer Insects

Saturday, July 18, 2:00 p.m.- 4:00 p.m.

We'll look for butterflies, dragonflies, damselflies and other summer insects at Dunback Meadow. Meet at the entrance to the conservation area near the corner of Allen Street and Pitcairn Place. Allen Street is off Waltham Street just south of Clarke School. Co-sponsored by Cambridge Entomological Club and the Menotomy Bird Club.

Leaders: Maria Aliberti Lubertazzi, Andrea Golden, andgold@comcast.net

Cancelled in case of rain 🌲

Other Walks

The Friends of Arlington's Great Meadow (located in Lexington) sponsors walks on the third weekend of the month. Check their web site (www.foagm.org) for details. Two upcoming walks are:

Saturday April 18 @ 9:30 am - A Third Saturday Nature Walk

Join us to see nature in Arlington's Great Meadows. We will emphasize botany (because plants don't fly away), but we'll look for birds and other wonders of nature, too. We'll see how nature is changing as the seasons pass. We'll walk to dry upland areas and along the boardwalk in the lower wetland areas.

Sunday April 26 @ 2:00-4:00 pm - Spring Life at Infinity Pond

Join local entomologist Maria Aliberti Lubertazzi for a survey of the area's aquatic life. Dragonflies and many other insects can be found as larvae in the ponds at Arlington's Great Meadows.

Local Environmental Groups with Interesting Walks and Events

Bedford Conservation Land Stewards <http://www.nemow.net/BedfordStewards.html>

Belmont Citizens Forum <http://www.belmontcitizensforum.org>

Bicycling in Lexington <http://www.hbingham.com/lexbike/index.htm>

Charles River Watershed Association <http://www.crwa.org>

Friends of Arlington's Great Meadow in Lexington

http://www.foagm.org/AGM_Inventory/concomGM1001.htm

Lexington Conservation Stewards Newsletter

<http://www.lexingtonma.gov/conservation/stewards.cfm>

Lexington Global Warming Action Coalition <http://www.lexgwac.org>

Maps of Lexington Conservation Areas

<http://www.lexingtonma.org/conservation/Lands/Conslandkey.html>

Massachusetts Audubon Society <http://www.massaudubon.org>

Menotomy Bird Club <http://www.mrines.com/menotomy>

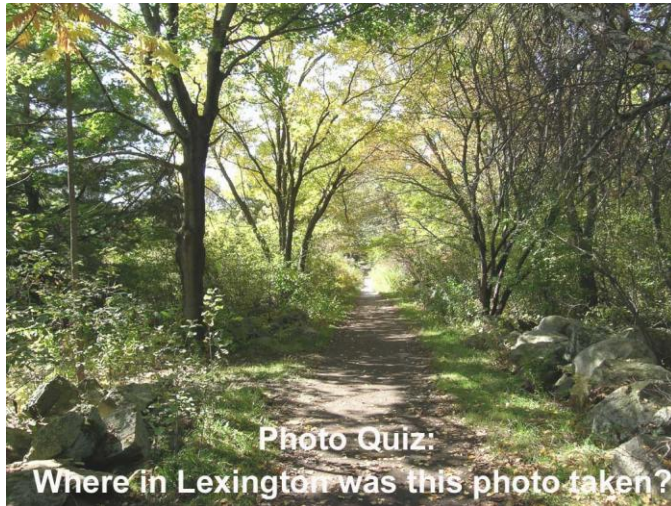
Mystic River Watershed Association <http://www.mysticriver.org>

Shawsheen River Watershed association <http://www.Shawsheen.org>

The Nature Conservancy <http://www.nature.org>

Bringing Nature Home – How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens, by Douglas W. Tallamy

Reviewed by Keith Ohmart



Those of us who fancy ourselves gardeners no doubt have at least a passing acquaintance with the subject of native versus non-native plant species when it comes to selecting what we choose to grow in our gardens. Douglas Tallamy's recent book on the subject was an eye-opener for this reader in why we should all start rethinking what it is we choose to plant in our yards.

Tallamy's book does an excellent job of explaining the critical importance of native plant species in sustaining the web of life that comprises our local ecological systems. As both a bird watcher and a sometime gardener, I have long known the importance of planting native food sources for our local and migratory birds when choosing landscape materials. Never-the-less, reading Tallamy's book provided a lot of missing details that I had never stopped to consider. I think the biggest, aha moment for me was his explanation that non-native plants rarely if ever sustain the population of native insects upon which our local and migratory birds feed. No insects, no more birds, or reptiles, or amphibians, or small mammals and so on up the food chain.

Tallamy does not stop with explaining the science. He also makes the point that each of us in our small scale backyard gardening pursuits can collectively make a big

contribution in beginning to restore the health of our vastly altered suburban ecosystems. He makes the case that we have so altered the native habitat of our suburbs and exurbs that finding a way to share the habitats we now occupy with the plants and other creatures that evolved here is going to be critical to maintaining our nation's biodiversity.

All in all, this was a thoughtful and provocative book that is a must-read for everyone with even a passing interest in backyard gardening and landscaping. The "Big Idea" chapters explaining why native plant species are important are complemented with detailed chapters on what to grow and why. This isn't the kind of book that you will read cover to cover in one or two sittings but rather one that you will find yourself coming back to over time as you sort through each season's gardening choices. 🌲

**Beyond Burning Bush and
Barberry**
**Exceptional native woody plants for
beautiful bird-friendly gardens**
By Nell Walker



The two plants in the title probably grow near every street in Lexington, having "jumped the fence" to end up in our woods and out-of-the-way private spaces - classic transformations from exotic garden plant to invasive species - and biodiversity threat.

The book reviewed above, Douglas Tallamy's *Bringing Nature Home*, presents a persuasive argument that the effect of decades of gardening with non-native ornamentals has profoundly reduced North America's biodiversity. We must become more and more aware of the importance of using only native plants in our gardening and landscaping.

Sources of native plants:

The New England Wildflower Society (website: <http://www.newenglandwild.org>) has a great garden showcasing the importance of native plants. Native plants are propagated and sold at the society's two nurseries, in Framingham (Garden in the Woods) and in its Whately, MA farm.

To see how we are doing in the more mundane nursery world, I made a visit to the local Home Depot on a sunny Friday in late March. Once you get past the petunias and japanese pieris, the Depot folks are more environmentally conscious now than in the past. No barberry or burning bushes here. (A **Do Not Sell** list directed by state legislation bans the sale of over 100 species of exotic plants since Jan. 2009. See http://www.mass.gov/agr/farmproducts/proposed_prohibited_plant_list_v12-12-05.htm)

At the Depot I discovered a number of natives (mountain laurel is a great buy) and about an equal number of non-natives including callery pear - a lollipop tree that is about to be declared invasive in Massachusetts.

Native shrubs with wildlife value and desirable landscaping attributes:

What is a native plant? It depends on how strict you are. It could be defined as a species that was present before the arrival of the European colonists, which covers North America. The flora of native plants in New England still give us a great variety of choices. The plants listed below are native to this state or east of the Appalachians and north of Delaware Bay to Maine. This list just begins to scratch the surface of my favorite native woody plants. These shrubs range in height from 12 inches to 25 feet:

Amelanchier canadensis, shadbush, serviceberry 4-10 ft.
Aronia arbutifolia, red chokeberry 5-10 ft.
Cephalanthus occidentalis, buttonbush 3-8 ft.
Cornus sericea, *C. stolonifera*, *C. racmosa*, *C. amomum*, shrubby dogwood, 3-10 ft.
Clethra alnifolia, summersweet, pepperbush 4-9 ft.
Fothergilla gardenii, dwarf fothergilla 3-6 ft.
Hamamelis virginiana, witch hazel 20 ft.
Hydrangea quercifolia, oakleaf hydrangea 3-10 ft.
Gaylussachia brachycera, box huckleberry (evergreen) 8-12 in. .
Ilex glabra, inkberry (evergreen) 3-6 ft.
Ilex verticillata, winterberry 6-10 ft.
Itea virginica, Virginia sweetspire 3-6 ft.
Kalmia latifolia, mountain laurel (evergreen) 4-15 ft.
Lindera bezoin, spicebush 8-15 ft.
Magnolia virginiana, sweetbay magnolia 25 ft.
Myrica pensylvanica, bayberry (evergreen) 2-6 ft.
Rhododendron maximum, rosebay rhododendron 6-10 (25) ft.
Rhododendron sp., swamp azalea, rhodora, flame az., etc. 2-15 ft,
Rosa carolina, Carolina rose
Rosa palustris, swamp rose
Rhus typhina, staghorn sumac 8-18 ft.
R. coppalina, shining sumac 5-8 ft.
Salix discolor, pussy willow 6-15 ft.
Sambucus canadensis, elderberry 6-15 ft
Vaccinium corymbosum, highbush blueberry 3-10 ft.
Viburnum opulus var. *americanum*, American cranberrybush 4-12 ft.
Viburnum lantanoides (*alnifolium*), hobblebush 4-12 ft.
Xanthorhiza simplicissima, yellowroot 12-16 inches

Native trees

For a list of recommended native trees, download Lexington's Tree Management Manual at <http://ci.lexington.ma.us/dpw/Documents/treemanual.pdf> . Go to p. 20 for an essay on invasives and p. 9 for a list of 43 native trees. This 2003 edition of the manual, published by the Town of Lexington Tree Committee, will soon be

supplanted in midsummer by the 2009 edition. Paperback copies of the first edition are still available at the Town Office Bldg., 1625 Mass. Ave. 🌲

Books About Reducing our Carbon Footprint Available at Cary Library

Scheckel, Paul. *The Home Energy Diet*. 2005

Stoyke, Godo. *The Carbon Buster's Home Energy Handbook*. 2007.

Trask, Crissy. *It's Easy Being Green: A Handbook for Earth-Friendly Living*. 2006.

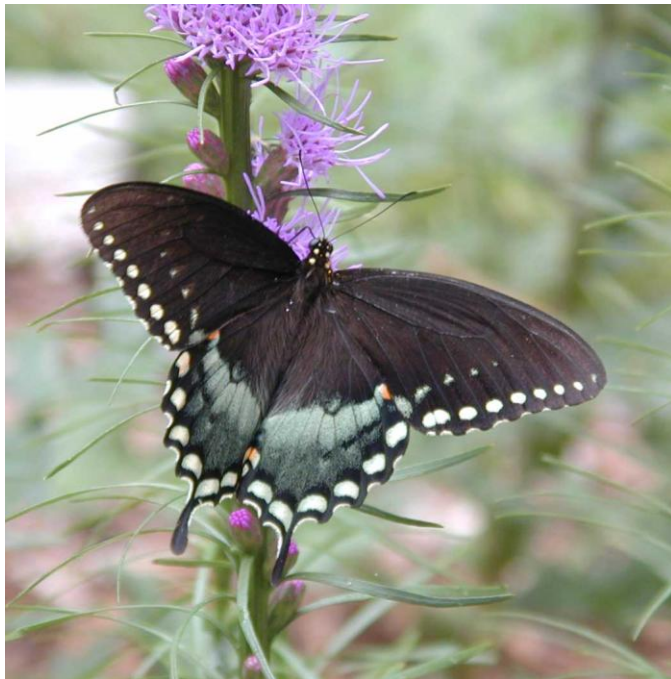
Brower, Michael. *The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices*. 1999.

Gershon, David. *Low Carbon Diet*. 2006.

Loux, Renee. *Easy Green Living*. 2008.

Environmental Zoning Issues

By Eileen Entin



The Planning Board has submitted for Town Meeting consideration a warrant article that will revise the zoning for the Hartwell Avenue commercial district. If approved, this article will allow property owners in that district to significantly increase the size of their buildings, yielding higher tax revenues for the Town but also more demands on Town infrastructure. If zoning revisions are approved, property owners will have a reduced need to seek variances before increasing the intensity of use of their properties. This will result in fewer opportunities for the Town to encourage, or require, environmentally sound measures when buildings are built or renovated.

For CLC's Candidates' Newsletter, we asked candidates for Town office to comment on whether a package of environmentally progressive measures should be a part of the zoning changes for the Hartwell Avenue district or any other commercial district that Town Meeting may be asked to approve in the future.

Thirty-three candidates responded to our question. The candidates' responses were both thoughtful and insightful. All of the respondents were favorable to including environmentally progressive measures as part of the zoning changes. The candidates' responses addressed two major areas: transportation and environmentally sound development practices.

More than 80 percent of the candidates discussed the need for traffic mitigation in their response. The suggestions they offered included actions to:

- decrease vehicle trips (such as shuttles to public transportation, preferred parking for employees who carpool, and support for public transportation passes)
- support bike or multi-person vehicle travel (such as illuminated sidewalks, bike lanes, and shower facilities)
- mitigate traffic (such as traffic calming measures and traffic lights)



Similarly, more than 80 percent of the candidates spoke to the need for environmentally sound development of the properties.

- The buildings should incorporate:
 - Environmentally sensitive design (e.g., through shape and orientation of buildings)
 - Use of high r-value insulation
 - Alternative and renewable energy sources
 - Attention to water efficiency (e.g., low-flush toilets, recirculating systems for hot water distribution)
- The external environment should include:
 - Planting of shade trees and native plants
 - Use of non-potable water
 - Permeable paved surfaces

CLC has submitted a letter summarizing the candidates' ideas and suggestions to the Planning Board. The complete set of responses can be viewed on the CLC website (<http://www.lexingtonma.org/clc/Newsletters/NewsletterFeb2009.pdf>)




Back Yard Science and Climate Change

By Keith Ohmart

Do you take notice of when the forsythias bloom? The first dandelions, or when the red maples flower? If so, a new citizen science project from the USA National Phenology Network may be just the thing for you. This organization is recruiting volunteers who are interested in monitoring changes in recurring annual life cycle events, such as the leaf or flower development of many locally common plant species. It is part of a broad effort to track the effects of climate change.

The work involved is relatively straightforward. Select as many species as you wish to monitor for this year's growing season from the list of 200 found on the organization's web site. This writer selected a total of seven, all found in our back yard. Consult the handy on-line information on what to observe for each species selected and begin monitoring on a regular basis, filing your observations on-line as you go.

The power of citizen science projects such as these is that the individual observations are aggregated with those from across the country, providing a comprehensive database that becomes the raw material from which climate and other scientists can draw meaningful conclusions in many different areas. And at the personal level, participation in projects of this nature enriches our own personal casual observations in several different ways, a win-win for everyone.


To learn more about this intriguing opportunity, visit the USA NPN web site at <http://www.usanpn.org/>. 

Answer to Photo Quiz: Willards Woods near the North Street entrance

Photo Credits: All photos in this issue are by Ned Eisner and were taken in Lexington.



Notes from the Field: Doran Meadow

Barbara Kent reports that this is the third “Year of the Voles”, with a serious infestation in the meadow and the surrounding lawn. They have girdled a young maple and attacked a 3-inch Kousa dogwood. Evidently the voles work under the deep snow, where they construct tight mazes and damage the bark of young woody plants. Last year there was a similar problem in the tree nursery, but plastic wraps seem to have reduced the damage there. Ned Eisner says we could have 350 voles in a mere half-acre meadow. Nell Walker luckily doesn’t believe they will destroy planted wild flowers. 

Spring 2009 Trail Building Workday Schedule

By Keith Ohmart

This is your chance to take part in Lexington’s popular trail-building program, sponsored by the Conservation Stewards and the Bicycle Advisory Committee. A Mass Highway grant supplies funds for the materials, as long as Lexington supplies the volunteer labor. Last year over 800’ of boardwalk were constructed, using nearly 600 hours of volunteer labor. Plans for this year are to construct well over twice that amount.

These boardwalks allow children to walk to school without using busy streets, provide hikers with earlier spring access to walking trails, and protect trails in fragile wetlands from damage caused by heavy use.

No particular skills are needed to participate. All tools and training are provided. Best of all, this is an enjoyable way to get out and enjoy the company of others from the

community while engaged in a worthwhile effort to make our wonderful conservation lands more accessible to all.

Dates and locations may change, so before you head out, check the Conservation Stewards' web site, <http://www.lexingtonma.gov/conservation/events.cfm>, or call 781-862-0500 x 240 to confirm time and meeting place. Start time is usually 8:30 a.m.

Sunday, April 5th: Lower Vine Brook trail relocation
Saturday, April 11th: New Meagherville bridge
Sunday, May 31st: Dunback Meadow crushed stone
Sunday, June 7th: Dunback Meadow boardwalk
Saturday, June 20th: Dunback Meadow boardwalk
Saturday, June 27th: Dunback Meadow boardwalk
Saturday, July 11th: Hayden Woods new boardwalk at Valleyfield Street
Saturday, July 18th: Walnut Street Metro Parkway connection (boardwalk)
Saturday, July 25th: Hayden Woods new boardwalk at Valleyfield Street
Saturday, August 1st: Walnut Street Metro Parkway connection (boardwalk)
Saturday, August 8th: Walnut Street Metro Parkway connection (trail building)
Saturday, August 22nd: Walnut Street Metro Parkway connection (boardwalk)
Saturday, Sept. 12th: Hayden Woods new boardwalk at Valleyfield Street
Saturday, Sept. 26th: Walnut Street Metro Parkway connection (boardwalk)

Help plant trees in the Lexington Tree Nursery

By Gerry Paul

The third yearly tree planting at the Lexington tree nursery will take place on Saturday, May 2 from 9:00am - 1:00pm. No tree planting experience is necessary!



At 9 a.m. members of the tree committee will provide instructions on tree planting, and planting sheets will be provided that will indicate what trees will be planted in designated locations. We'll then break up into groups of 2-4 people who will:

- select the trees to be planted
- trim the roots if necessary
- dip the roots in gel
- plant the trees in planting bags in pre-dug holes and distribute mulch around the trees.

What to bring:

- Work gloves
- Long handled shovel (if you have one)
- Wheelbarrow(if convenient)

Directions: Take East Street toward Lowell Street; as you pass the old Dorans Greenhouse, take a right on Maureen and your next right on East Emerson. Park on East Emerson, walk straight ahead to the dirt road and

go left. The tree nursery entrance is 200 feet down the road. This is a great way to have some fun, get some exercise and help ensure we have a steady supply of trees for future planting on the streets of Lexington. Mark the dates on your calendars. now. Questions? Contact Jim Wood: 781-862-0645, jamescwoodjr@rcn.com

Ada Clapham Govan's Bird Sanctuary

By Kate Fricker

There is an interesting story connected to a little known piece of open space on Woodland Street, near the top of Meriam Hill. The land was located next to the house of Ada Clapham Govan, an invalid who was housebound and in constant pain. One day a chickadee landed on the railing of her piazza in the middle of a snowstorm, starting an interest in birds that filled Ada's life and drove away her pain. She started a feeding station, eventually providing over 600 pounds of seeds in one year. She learned to identify the birds and to band them. This led to cataloging the comings and goings of individual birds and publishing records in birding journals. It is said that Mrs. Govan even used a shotgun from her window to scare away larger birds and protect the smaller songbirds she favored. Birds became Ada's friends. She humanized them, describing them in her book *Wings at my Window* in beautiful lyrical prose.

One day Ada heard chainsaws in the woods and became alarmed that the land might be developed and used for housing. She wrote an urgent appeal to readers of the birding journals that she'd been writing for, and through their contributions raised enough money to buy the land and preserve it. Initially it was held in a private trust, but the trustees eventually transferred ownership to the town. The original trust agreement was that no public access would be allowed, and that restriction was carried forward in the gifting to the town.

Unfortunately, the strict legal restrictions on the land even prevents maintenance of it. Over the years the trees on the property have developed into a mature forest that while handsome in its own right, supports a far less diversified understory of plant species. Compounding this problem, invasives such as bittersweet and other non-native species are encroaching around the edges. Sadly, in spite of all of Ada's planning for the future, the present forest no longer supports the abundance of insect food that attracted the diversity of birds that Ada knew. This makes for an interesting object lesson in how even the best of intentions sometimes result in unintended consequences. Those interested in looking at the property may walk by it on a paved trail located on school property next to the sanctuary. You will find that maintenance of the town-owned property is also haphazard, as it is hard to tell where the town property ends and the sanctuary begins.

Middlesex Conservation District Spring Plant Sale

April 24 (3-6pm) and April 25 (8am - noon)

4H Fairgrounds, 51 South Chelmsford Rd, Westford

All items may be ordered in advance for best selection, through March 27. The sale will feature tree and shrub seedlings, perennials, fruits, groundcovers and garden supplies. Please visit our website at www.middlesexconservation.org or call 978 692 9395 to obtain a sale brochure. All proceeds benefit our conservation programs.