



*Citizens for
Lexington
Conservation*

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Have You Renewed Your Membership?

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 2002," you are up to date. If it says "Dues paid 2001" (or earlier), then it is time to renew your membership for 2002. 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 \$7.00 for a regular membership or \$10.00 for a sustaining membership to CLC, P.O. Box 292, Lexington, MA 02420-0003.

Help CLC Save Paper and Postage

If you would like to receive your CLC newsletter as a PDF file attached to an email, ask Kate Fricker at kfricker@alum.swarthmore.edu. All formatting and graphics will be identical to the snail mail version, and you will receive yours before anyone else. In addition to avoiding paper waste, CLC will save about one dollar per issue for each person who elects to receive the email version.

CLC Publications

These publications are available free on our web site,

<http://www.lexingtonma.org/clc/HomePage.htm>

Birds of Dunback Meadow
Ferns of Whipple Hill
Introduction to Hayden Woods
A Walk Through Hayden Woods - New
A Wildflower Walk at Whipple Hill
Discovering the Paint Mine
Building a Brushpile
The Red Fox in Lexington
Insect Pests of Shade Trees
Winter Feeder Checklist
Checklist of Lexington Birds
Wildflower List for Lexington
Checklist - Birds of Whipple Hill
Flowers and Shrubs of Whipple Hill, 1982
Flowers & Shrubs of Whipple Hill & Locke Farm, 2000
Geological History of Lexington
Checklist of Birds of the Great Meadows, Lexington
Guide to the Great Meadows: A Walking Tour.

Contact Us

Use our web site comment page to send in interesting conservation-related happenings or sightings of unusual birds or other wildlife that we can use in our web site and our newsletter:

<http://www.lexingtonma.org/clc/Comment.htm>, or contact Eileen at ebe@aptima.com, or Kate at kfricker@alum.swarthmore.edu



**Citizens for Lexington Conservation
Spring Walks - 2002**

Garlic-Mustard Eradication Project

April 27, 1 – 4 pm

Come learn to identify this common yard-invasive pest and why it's so important to combat it. Spend an hour or so helping carry on our campaign to eliminate Garlic Mustard from this heavily used recreation/conservation area. Meet at the Worthen Road end of the bike path through Lincoln Park. Bring a yard-weight trash bag and a pair of gardening gloves with you.

Leaders – Nell Walker and Maryanne King, 781-860-0229 or mkingmking@aol.com

Plant Habitats of Whipple Hill

May 19, 9:30am – 12 noon

Explore the influence on plant life of different habitats from rocky ledge to forest floor to swamps and ponds with local botanist Betty Wright. Meet at the parking lot at the top of Winchester Drive.

Leader – Betty Wright, 781-643-6304

Art in the Field

June 1, 10 am – 12 noon

Meet at the Estabrook School parking lot off Grove Street in Lexington.

Arlayne Peterson, a local landscape painter, will lead a walk through Hennessey's Field, focusing on capturing impressions of the landscape. This is an opportunity to experience and "see" what may be a familiar landscape from a new perspective. Bring material to sketch, photograph, record on video or audio tape, pencil and paper for poetry or prose. *Rain date: June 9th.*

Leader – Arlayne Peterson, 781-861-8574

Birds in Arlington's Great Meadow in Lexington

June 8, 8 am – 11am

Meet at the parking lot of the Waldorf School, 793 Mass. Ave, Lexington, near the intersection with Routes 4 and 225. Trails may be wet in places. Don't forget your binoculars and other optical equipment!

Leader – Chris Floyd, 781-862-2841

For further information on all walks, contact Maryanne King (781-860-0229) or Keith Ohmart (781-862-6216), or visit our web site, <http://www.lexingtonma.org/clc/HomePage.htm>.

Except *Art in the Field*, all walks held rain or shine.

News from Town Meeting

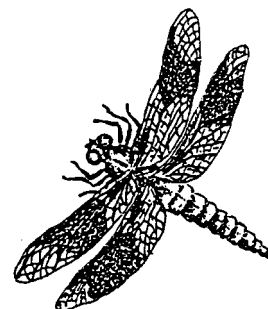
By Al Levine

As usual, a number of issues of particular interest to CLC members could be discussed by Town Meeting this spring. A Special Town Meeting was convened on March 25 primarily for consideration of major capital projects that will be subject to a debt exclusion vote in May. One of these was to be acquisition of parts of the Wright Farm, a property that is on Grove St. near or at the Bedford town line. (It is on the right, when going toward Bedford, and is between the top of the hill and the town line.) Unfortunately, the negotiations between the Lexington Conservation Commission and the owners are not concluded, so no action was taken in this Special Town Meeting. Future actions are possible, since the negotiations are ongoing, but the possibilities for funding the acquisition and the timing of getting approval are not clear.

Adoption of the Community Preservation Act is on the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting. In brief, this Act may be adopted by a town upon approval by Town Meeting and by the voters at a regularly scheduled election. When a town adopts the provisions of the Act, it chooses a surcharge rate, between 0 and 3%, to apply to all collections of real estate taxes. If Lexington were to adopt the Act with the maximum rate, it could raise more than \$2M per year. There are exclusions allowed for the first \$100K of value of a property and for certain low-income households. The funds raised through the surcharge must be used for acquisition and management of open space, affordable housing, and historic preservation. It is my guess that the CPA will not be approved for adoption this year because it is seen as a tax increase, and conflicts with the desire to get the capital project debt exclusions approved (also tax increases), but one can never be sure of outcomes in the large political arena. Next year, it is highly likely that there will be an attempt to pass an override for operating expenses, and that will also be a tax increase. The future of the CPA in Lexington is thus in doubt; it is most likely to be adopted when the Town has a project that can be paid for through the CPA and there is no other good way to do it. A conservation land acquisition may be the project that accomplishes this, but there are others as well. Adoption of the CPA would have a very positive effect on the long-term prospects for conservation land acquisitions in general, because such acquisitions do not have at present any dedicated source of funding.

Finally, I write this just after the Middlesex Superior Court issued its decision about Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) in Lexington. The future of PAYT depends on the positions of the Selectmen, and on future actions of Town Meeting. Resolution of the future of PAYT is likely to take some time, and will probably not be settled when this newsletter is circulated; therefore it is likely to be useful for interested persons to let Town officials know of their support for PAYT.

Editor's note: On April Fool's Day, Town Meeting voted to support a proposal to cover the three soccer fields on the capped landfill in Lincoln Park with artificial turf, a total of four acres or more. The cost of this project is expected to be \$3.4 million. There will be a special election in May when all Lexington voters will have a chance to vote yes or no on this item. Keep informed as more information becomes available.



Tick Talk
By Kate Fricker



Because of recent publicity about Lyme Disease, there has been some concern about ticks in Lexington. Although Lyme Disease is transmitted by Deer Ticks, which are found locally, the probability of actually catching the disease is very small. Last year only six Lexington residents came down with the disease, and at least three of these are thought to have picked up their ticks elsewhere. Not all Deer Ticks are infected, and not all infected ticks transmit the disease when they bite. Even when an infected tick bites, it is very rare for it to spread the disease during the first 24 to 36 hours it is attached to a person. Nevertheless, it is worth learning to recognize the ticks and take some precautions to avoid contact with them.



Dog Tick

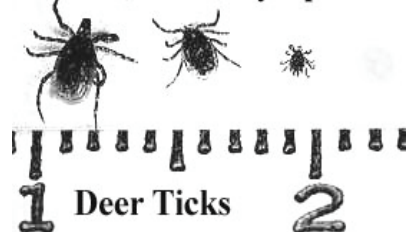
There are two kinds of ticks that are likely to attach themselves to people in Lexington, the Deer Tick and the Dog Tick. The Dog Tick, which does not spread Lyme Disease, is larger, rougher looking, and has white markings on its back. The Deer Tick is smoother, smaller, and has a more even coloration. Ticks do not jump or fly through the air. They get onto people by climbing onto shrubs and tall grasses and reaching out for anything that gives off carbon dioxide, so if you walk in the center of the trail and avoid brushing against tall grasses and shrubs you will avoid the ticks. Wearing light colored slacks (tucked into your socks) makes it easier to see ticks and remove them before they bite. DEET is an effective repellent, and Permethrin (labeled for clothing only) kills ticks on contact. If a tick should bite, remove it with narrow tweezers that can get under the tick. Pull it off slowly without squeezing the tick's body. One can easily get much more information on the Internet by searching in Google.com for "Lyme Disease".



Deer Tick

It would be interesting to have a survey of the tick population in various conservation areas in town. One way to count the tick population is to wrap some dry ice (solid carbon dioxide) in a white cloth and drag it through the bushes or grass. A plain white cloth would serve almost as well. The white color makes it easy to count the ticks that latch onto it. If you should do this, send the results to kfricker@alum.swarthmore.edu, and we will display the information at the CLC table on Discovery Day.

Female, Male, Nymph



Pat's Meadow Update

By Nell Walker

(See map on following page.)

This summer there should be a greater display of the wildflowers that were planted last year in Pat's Meadow, located in Lincoln Park. The map can be used as a guide to find the meadow in the park. Please walk on the paths around the meadow, not through it, as the soil is soft and the crowns are vulnerable.

Only native species of grasses and wildflowers were planted. Native means plants indigenous to North America prior to European settlement. (Not all of them were native to Massachusetts, however.) None of the plants were cultivars bred from the native species, since cultivars do not have the genetic variations present in the wild species.

Unfortunately the area has plenty of "aliens" already there, such as agricultural grasses and Queen Anne's Lace, Oriental Bittersweet, Tansy, Ragweed, etc. The first year of maintenance was entirely spent in pulling up these weeds or preventing them from going to seed.

Although some seeds were used, most of the funds were spent the expensive way, on plugs or small seedlings, since we were pretty sure that would give a better head start than seed, and indeed, some plants even flowered the first year, which we did not expect.

Learning from New England Wildflower Society's experience, we did not plant just flowers. It turns out that meadows do better when combined with native grasses. NEWFS had to abandon their first meadow effort because there were no grasses.

The best maintenance we could do for Pat's meadow now would be a prescribed burn in the second or third growing season. We are working on getting the Fire Dept. to OK burning in March or April. This will stimulate growth of the native plants, giving them a competitive edge over the existing weeds. If we can't burn this year, we will mow in early summer with a high cut (8"). We mow a path between the woodland and the meadow to define the meadow, and keep the woody species from encroaching.

The overall intent was to have a tall meadow, since we could get more butterfly-inviting species, discourage humans and dogs from trampling into the field, and give long sight lines from the north as one walks through the soft path from north to south.

The new master plan for the whole 60 acre Lincoln Park, to be presented to Town Meeting in early April, introduces the possibility that a small section of the Vinebrook will eventually be liberated from its culvert-tomb and run through part of Pat's Meadow.

Volunteers are welcome to help with maintenance in late April. Contact Nell Walker at 781-674-2705 or nelwalk@earthlink.net.



A Garlic Mustard Reminder: The last half of April is the best time to pull those invasive alien Garlic Mustard plants, bag them and throw them out with the trash. If you wait until May they will set seeds and spread in every direction.

The Western Greenway -- Big is Beautiful

By Roger Wrubel, Director, Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary

It takes a large tract of continuous forest to support viable breeding populations of species of interest, such as neotropical migratory songbirds. These birds winter in the tropics and breed in spring and summer in the temperate forests of North America. Their populations are dwindling and there is much interest in protecting their habitat.

Forest tracts must be big enough to provide refuges for populations should there be large-scale disturbances such as fires and storms. They must also be big enough to allow for viable populations of the species of interest: populations large enough to successfully breed and rear young to reproductive age. According to one study 15,000 acres is the minimum size of continuous forest needed to assure the survival of migratory songbirds over a period of 100 years.

Sadly, there are no longer any forested tracts of this size in the Greater Boston region nor in most of eastern Massachusetts. Development has fragmented our natural habitat of oak-conifer forest into small islands. The closest qualifying site is the Myles Standish State Forest in Plymouth at 14,651 acres. Greater Boston's largest sites are the MDC's Blue Hills Reservation, at 5,800 acres, and the Middlesex Fells Reservation, with 2,500 acres. Habitat, with its 87 acres, is quite small in comparison.

But Habitat is actually part of a 1300 acre, largely undiscovered jewel. Because of historical circumstance and the generosity and vision of some of our citizens there are about 1300 acres of interconnected undeveloped forests, meadows, and wetlands, unofficially known as the *Western Greenway*, in Belmont, Waltham and Lexington. The greenway is made up of at least 11 separately owned properties. Some are protected, such as Rock Meadow (Belmont conservation land), the MDC's Beaver Brook Reservation and the Storer/Paine Estate (Waltham conservation land), but many are not. For example, the privately owned Olympus Hospital with over 100 acres in Waltham and Lexington is unprotected and ripe for development, and the Fernald School and the Federal Center may close in the next decade, with the dispositions of their lands unknown. The 240-acre Met State Hospital seems to be partially protected but its ultimate fate is still in question.

To raise public awareness and out of enjoyment, I lead walks through parts of the greenway in all seasons. We start at Habitat and walk over McLean Hospital land, Rock Meadow, Metropolitan State Hospital and end at the western border of Olympus Hospital. We cover over three miles without venturing onto the portion of the greenway south of Trapelo Road. Many of the participants are familiar with some parts of the greenway but few have been on all the properties or know how they are interconnected.



By itself the Western Greenway can not provide the needed forest acreage for the long term survival of populations of neotropical migratory birds but it may provide essential stop-over points for these birds to reach their breeding grounds further north and west. It may also provide shorter-term breeding grounds for migratory birds, which may be important for the survival of what conservation biologists refer to as metapopulations, or networks of semi-isolated but intermingling populations. Lands in their natural state also provide

us all with many ecosystems services such as purifying our air and water and flood control. If you have visited the wetlands on the Met State after a heavy rain you know their capacity to soak up water. Additionally, the parts of the greenway have long benefited those who use the lands for walking, bird watching, contemplation, and as a refuge from our hectic world. Just imagine the public value of a well-maintained greenway trail system that would allow easy access to the less adventurous.

With the assistance of the Citizens for Lexington Conservation and the Belmont Land Trust, the Waltham Land Trust has applied for a state Greenways grant to create a presentation and produce a brochure and map to raise public awareness about this remarkable resource six miles from downtown Boston. It is my hope that by raising public awareness of what we have and what might be lost forever, the citizens of the region will recognize the greenway's value and vulnerability and take action to secure its future.

Note:

On June 1, 8:30-11a.m., there will be a Western Greenway Walk from Habitat Wildlife Sanctuary. Fee: \$20 Mass Audubon Society members/ \$24 non-members.

Reservations Required 617-489-5050. Space limited to 20 participants.

Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows

By Keith Ohmart

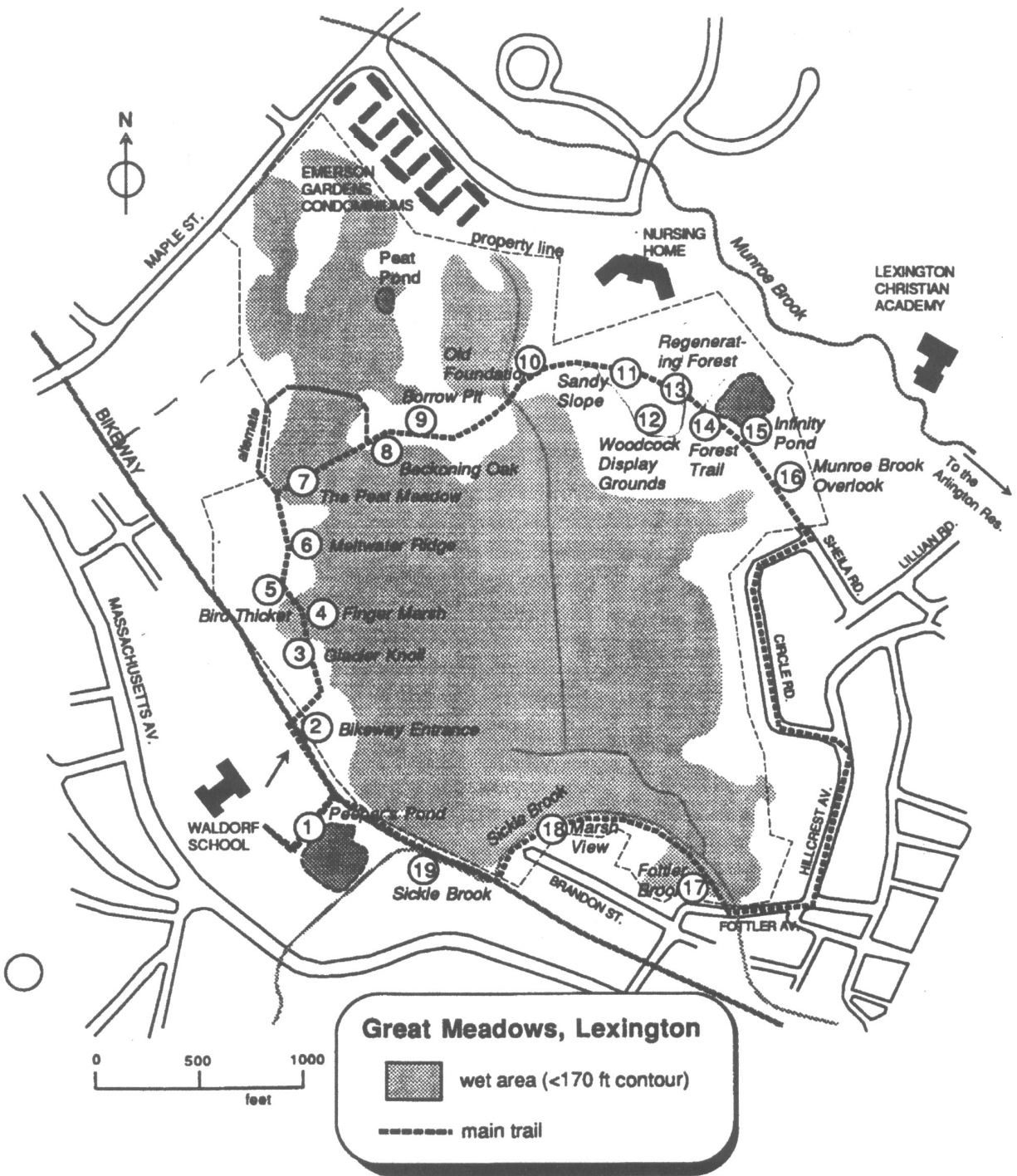
An organizational meeting to create an advocacy group to be known as Friends of Arlington's Great Meadow was held on the evening of March 12 at the Community Safety Building on Mystic Street in Arlington. Over 50 enthusiastic citizens of both Arlington and Lexington were in attendance, including representatives from the Arlington Conservation Commission and the Arlington Open Space Committee, as well as area state representatives. The Great Meadows is an atypical property in that it is located within Lexington, but owned by Arlington.

A presentation was made of a Natural Resource Inventory and Stewardship Plan that was completed last fall at the direction of the Arlington Conservation Commission. This report was authored by Frances Clark of Carex Associates and can be viewed in its entirety at <http://www.town.arlington.ma.us/town/concom/GM/concomGM1001.htm>. Copies are also available at the Arlington and Lexington Public Libraries.

Following the presentation, the group split up into three sub-groups that focused on educational issues, resource management issues, and political process issues. The overall purpose of the Friends Group is to create an organization that is committed to the preservation of this valuable natural landscape with the participation of community members and town officials from Arlington, Lexington, and the surrounding communities.

Meetings of the group have been scheduled for April 9 and May 28. CLC strongly encourages all interested members of the community to join this group and attend the meetings. A listserve has also been created for communication among group members. For further information or to be added to the listserve, contact either Andrea Golden (781-646-3941) or Mike Tabacynski (mjt1@rcn.com).





Biodiversity Days at Arlington's Great Meadow

By Andrea Golden

Last June, a group of Arlington and Lexington residents did a survey of the flora and fauna of the Great Meadows as part of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs' second annual Biodiversity Days program, held on June 8-10, 2001. The Executive Office of Environmental Affairs is creating a database of information on Massachusetts biodiversity based largely on sightings of plants and animals encountered during the Biodiversity Days events. The database serves as a central repository of data from all over Massachusetts. It can be used to sort listings by date and locale, to generate a list of species noted for each location, or to generate a list of species seen in (for instance) Lexington, with one mention of each species.

Betty Wright (flora) and Karsten Hartel (fauna), both of Arlington, contributed the bulk of the listings for Biodiversity Days 2001, which totaled around 400 species of plants and animals. Additional sightings were made by Marj Rines and Renee LaFontaine of Arlington. Members of Arlingtonbirds, Marj's email discussion group devoted to local birds, also contributed sightings.

Chris Floyd led a CLC-sponsored bird walk of the Great Meadows on June 9. A highlight of the morning was a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, which was posted on Arlingtonbirds. In response to the posting, several birders came out to look for the cuckoo, and a Black-billed Cuckoo was later discovered by Marj and Renee.

Saturday night, a group of about 12 people gathered to look for nocturnal birds and insects. A small collection of insects was made, and Willow Flycatchers were heard calling. It was an unusual opportunity to see the meadow at night, and the low lying marsh was filled with fireflies.

On Sunday, June 10, an afternoon walk of the Great Meadows was led by Karsten Hartel and Betty Wright. A stop was made at Infinity Pond to observe a variety of pond life, including frogs, tadpoles and various aquatic insects and larvae. Betty pointed out some of the characteristic plants found in the uplands and marshy areas of the Great Meadows, including some of the invasive plants that have become a problem in some parts of the meadow. A public information table was also set up along the bike path, highlighting some of the finds from previous days.

Biodiversity Days this year will be held Friday, May 31 to Monday, June 3. With the help of other local groups, the Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows hopes to organize activities for Biodiversity Days again this year. We hope that people interested in helping with this effort will attend the next meeting of the Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows on April 9.

For more information:

- ? More information on Biodiversity Days and the Biodiversity Days database is available online at <http://data.massgis.state.ma.us/Biodiversity/>
- ? The 2001 Biodiversity flora and fauna lists are available at the Arlington Conservation Commission website, <http://www.town.arlington.ma.us/town/concom/GM/BDP-01.pdf>
- ? More information on Marj Rines' Arlingtonbirds is available at: <http://mrines.com/Birds/Arlington/>
- ? Also, see Marj's account of Biodiversity days 2001 at: <http://mrines.com/Miscellaneous/Biodiversity2001/>

Lexington Bicycle Advisory Committee Plans

by Mike Tabaczynski

You might ask, "What does the Bicycle Advisory Committee (LBAC) have to do with conservation in Lexington?" The answer is "plenty."

One of the central missions of LBAC is to promote car-free human-powered transportation throughout town, by bicycle, inline skates, scooters, skateboards, skis, and walking. Every time someone leaves their car at home, the citizens and environment of Lexington benefit from reduced traffic, reduced air pollution, and less pressure to pave open space to expand roads and parking.

To encourage people to drive less, LBAC works to:

- ? Maintain miles of improved surface pathways through town.
- ? Promote safe use of all public pathways.
- ? Construct new sustainable environmentally sensitive trails to provide better connections between neighborhoods and conservation areas.
- ? Seek easements where new construction would block public access to conservation areas and existing trails.
- ? Keep existing easements open to public use.

One of our current major projects is part of a long-term plan to reduce the number of parents who drive their kids to public schools. This year LBAC is targeting the Diamond Middle School and the Harrington School for improved human-powered access. In the Diamond School area, we are planning to improve over 1100 feet of problem single-track trail in Willards Woods by rerouting it to higher ground around boggy and eroded areas and constructing 300 feet of boardwalk where rerouting is not practical. In the open space adjoining the Harrington School, we are planning to build a 40-foot bridge across Fessenden Brook as part of a future trail connecting the school to John Hosmer Lane. The improvements in these two locations will make it practical for students from the Redcoat Lane, Longfellow Road, and Solomon Pierce Road neighborhoods to walk or ride their bikes to school via safer routes that avoid busy public streets, with a side benefit to the many recreational users of Willards Woods.

The best news about this project is how much it all will cost Lexington taxpayers: zero. We have applied for a DEM Greenways grant from the state to pay for the entire project, and at press time I have preliminary word that our application has been approved.

Frog Sing, 2002

Again this spring residents are urged to listen for frog and toad calls coming from local wetlands, and to participate in the Lexington Schools Elementary Science Program Spring Survey of Frogs and Toads.

Here is what the frogs sound like:

Wood Frog (quacking ducks)

Spring Peeper (sleigh bells)

Green Frog (twanging banjo)

Grey Tree Frog (short trill)

Bull Frog ("jug-of-rum")

American Toad (long, high trill)

For more information, see the Internet site: <http://hastings.lexingtonma.org/frogs>.