



# ***Citizens for Lexington Conservation***

**PO BOX 292, LEXINGTON, MA 02420-0003**

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**Kate Fricker, Editor**

**September, 2004**

**Eileen Entin, President**

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**One of the New Elms in Depot Square**



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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 2004," you are up to date. If it says "Dues paid 2003" (or earlier), then it is time to renew your membership for 2004. 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.

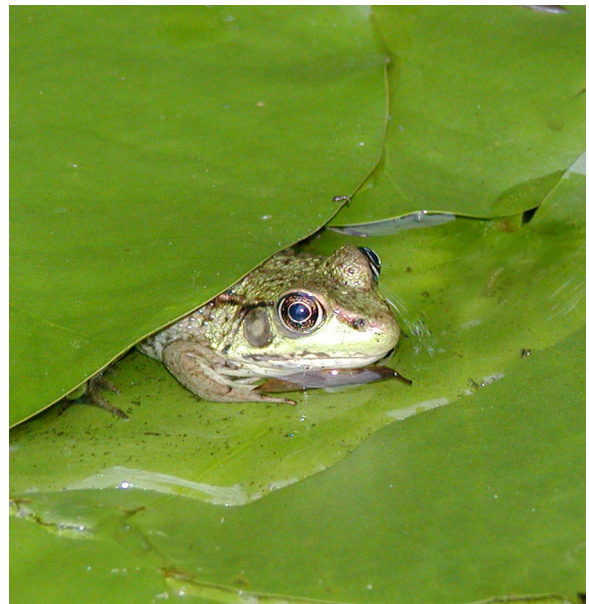
## CLC PUBLICATIONS

Over the years CLC has encouraged members to write guides to the open spaces in Lexington. These guides have now been scanned and are available at no charge on our web site, <http://www.lexingtonma.org/clc/HomePage.htm>. 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.

The files are saved as Adobe Acrobat .pdf files, and require the free Acrobat Reader. You can obtain this reader at <http://adobe.com/prodindex/acrobat/readstep.html>.

Available titles are:

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



If you would like copies of the guides and do not have access to the Internet, you will find computers available at Cary Memorial Library.

## Thank you, Spring Walk Leaders

Our thanks to Nell Walker, Keith Ohmart, Mike Tabaczynski, Kathy Goldin and David Williams for their leadership and inspiration on CLC's Spring Walks.

## **Citizens for Lexington Conservation: Fall Walks, 2004**

### **American Elm: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow**

Sunday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2 – 3:30 pm

Walk with Nell Walker through the American elm's history and prospects in Lexington. Meet at the Worthen Road entrance to the boardwalk in Lincoln Park and walk through the life stages of this iconic tree to finish at Emery Park, a/k/a Depot Square, where the Princeton elm variety has been planted. Please note that this walk is one-way.

Leader: Nell Walker (781-862-6943)

### **Fall Migration in Northeast Lexington**

Saturday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 8 - 11 am

Join Chris Floyd to view autumn bird life at the Arlington Reservoir, the Cataldo Reservation, and the Great Meadow. Meet Chris in the parking lot off Drake Road in Arlington Heights, observe the reservoir with scopes, then circle through the Cataldo Reservation, Busa Farm, along the Minuteman Bikeway, and the eastern edge of the Great Meadow. Wear comfortable, water-resistant boots/shoes. This walk is co-sponsored by the Friends of Arlington's Great Meadow in Lexington and the Menotomy Bird Club.

Leader: Chris Floyd (781-862-2841)

### **Ramble Through Hayden Woods**

Sunday, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2 – 3:30 pm

Winslow Green reprises his delightful afternoon ramble through old Hayden Woods. Join us at the Monroe Street entrance to the conservation land. Monroe Street is off Spring Street. Bear in mind that Eastern Standard Time begins on Sunday morning!

Leader: Winslow Green (781-861-8837)

### **Trail Improvement Work Day**

Saturday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 8:30 - 12 noon

The Lexington Conservation Stewards, with co-sponsorship from CLC, will hold a work-day to carry out trail improvements at Dunback Meadow. Waterproof footwear is suggested. Bring work gloves, loppers and hedge shears. Meet at the Bowman School parking lot.

Contact Keith Ohmart (781-862-6216) for further information

### **New! A Winter Walk**

Date and time to be announced

Early in February, Keith Ohmart will lead a birding walk along Lower Vine Brook. This winter walk will be a first for CLC. Check upcoming CLC newsletters and *The Lexington Minuteman* for further information.

For further information on all walks, contact Maryanne King (781-860-0229).



## Wanted: Walks Coordinator for Spring and Fall Walks

By Maryanne King

Have you enjoyed walking with CLC? I enjoyed the walks so much that three years ago I volunteered to work on organizing and publicizing them. Now we're looking for someone else who feels the same. The job involves e-mailing and phoning prospective walk leaders in the late winter for the spring walks and again in the late spring to early September for the fall series. All active CLC members plus the records of previous walk schedules are your primary resources. You then work up short descriptions and directions for the walks and e-mail the schedule to the CLC newsletter editor and to editors at the *Minuteman*. Calendar notes must also be e-mailed to the *Minuteman* for each walk individually. You will probably want to participate in as many walks as possible, but if you cannot there is always another CLC member who is there to introduce the leader and CLC. The walks coordinator also attends the CLC board meetings (about five evenings per year). I will be available to work along with the new coordinator on this spring's plans (we already have a couple of good prospects!) and to consult as needed in the future. I estimate that the phone, e-mail, and word-processing work require about ten to fifteen hours in aggregate each season. Anyone who is interested in learning more about the job should phone (781-860-0229) or e-mail me ([mkingmking@aol.com](mailto:mkingmking@aol.com)). I look forward to hearing from you!



## Ebony Spleenwort Found in Lexington

CLC member Betty Wright has located four of these rare plants on Whipple Hill. They are small evergreen ferns with slender, usually dark, wiry and tough stalks. Leaflets are shaped somewhat like a Christmas Fern.

If you are interesting in looking for yourself, prepare for an expedition. The GPS coordinates are N42 28 363, W71 11 024. If you lack a GPS receiver, try the following adventure:




Starting at the Whipple Hill parking lot, go up over the summit. Take the trail to the right, not the one that goes to the vernal pool. Cross over three spots that are wet at some time of the year. After the last, less than 100 yards further on, there is a path off to the left that is very vaguely triangular where it starts. Take it. After this, ancient paths and mountain bike trails make directions a nightmare. Go to the ledges, hopefully the ones to the left, that are parallel to the stream below. Turn around there, and on the right are more ledges. Go along these for about 100 yards to the spleenwort and several Marginal Ferns. Good Luck.



## Control of Invasive Plants: Three More Unwanted Aliens

By Kate Fricker

It is discouraging to leaf through lists of the most troublesome invasive alien plants and realize that most of them grow in Lexington. The following three plants form dense shade that our native vegetation cannot penetrate. If they are unchecked they dominate the environment and kill the native plants.

- **Norway Maple**, *Acer platanoides*: This tree looks like a sugar maple, but the foliage is much denser. It reproduces much faster, too. The thin, winged seeds are in pairs, joined at the head to make a wide V. Sugar maple seeds are much fatter, and form a narrower angle. If the leaf stem of a Norway maple is broken, it oozes a white milk-like sap. This tree came from Europe in the 1700s, and has had plenty of time to spread from the cities where it was planted into the countryside. Young trees can be pulled up with a weed-wrench. Older ones have to be cut down, as close to the ground as possible to reduce sprouting.
- 
- **Multiflora Rose**, *Rosa multiflora*: This is one of the most fragrant roses, with five petals and a yellow center. It produces many flowers that insects love, and many small, red rose hips that the birds love, spreading it everywhere. It forms dense thorny thickets up to 15 feet high. Apparently goats love these brambles, and are an excellent control measure. If you don't have a farm you will have to cut the stems at ground level six times a year, repeating the procedure for two to four years.
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- **Japanese Knotweed**, *Polygonum cuspidatum*. This large plant can be seen at the Monroe Street entrance to the Hayden Woods trail. It has bamboo-like stalks and long fat rhizomes underground that can be up to 60 feet long. As little as one inch of a rhizome can produce a new plant, making it almost impossible to kill a plant by digging it up. Japanese knotweed needs sunlight, so dense shade or a mulch of black plastic may control it. Frequent cutting helps, but this plant is hard to eliminate completely. Even chemicals are not very effective.
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## **Middlesex County Hospital Open Space**

By Stew Kennedy

In July we were all surprised to see the announcement that DCAM (the State's Division of Capital Asset Management) planned in August to sell at auction 6.9 acres of the former Middlesex County Hospital land in Lexington (5.6 acres) and Waltham (1.3 acres). That sale then went forward on August 11, with the purchaser paying almost \$1 Million per acre. To prevent such a surprise again, local stakeholders are organizing. Here's the story.

Unlike what was done for the adjacent Metropolitan State Hospital land – getting the State to deal with that large tract in its entirety via a coordinated plan – the Middlesex Hospital land has been carved up and is being dealt with piecemeal. That property, bounded by Trapelo Road in Waltham and in Lexington between Walnut Street and the eastern side of Brookhaven, previously had a large parcel in each town sold to developers for planned housing. The 6.9 acres comprising Lot 6 that were sold in August is contiguous to those two parcels and also will certainly get housing, as it's zoned RO. These three parcels contained all the former hospital buildings as well as the so-called “doctor's house.” The remaining parcels contain wooded uplands, meadows, and wetlands; they are currently open space and deserve to be protected as such. Two parcels in Waltham totaling about 11 acres are now owned by the city and are under conservation protection. But the remaining 59 acres controlled by DCAM are at risk for further development.

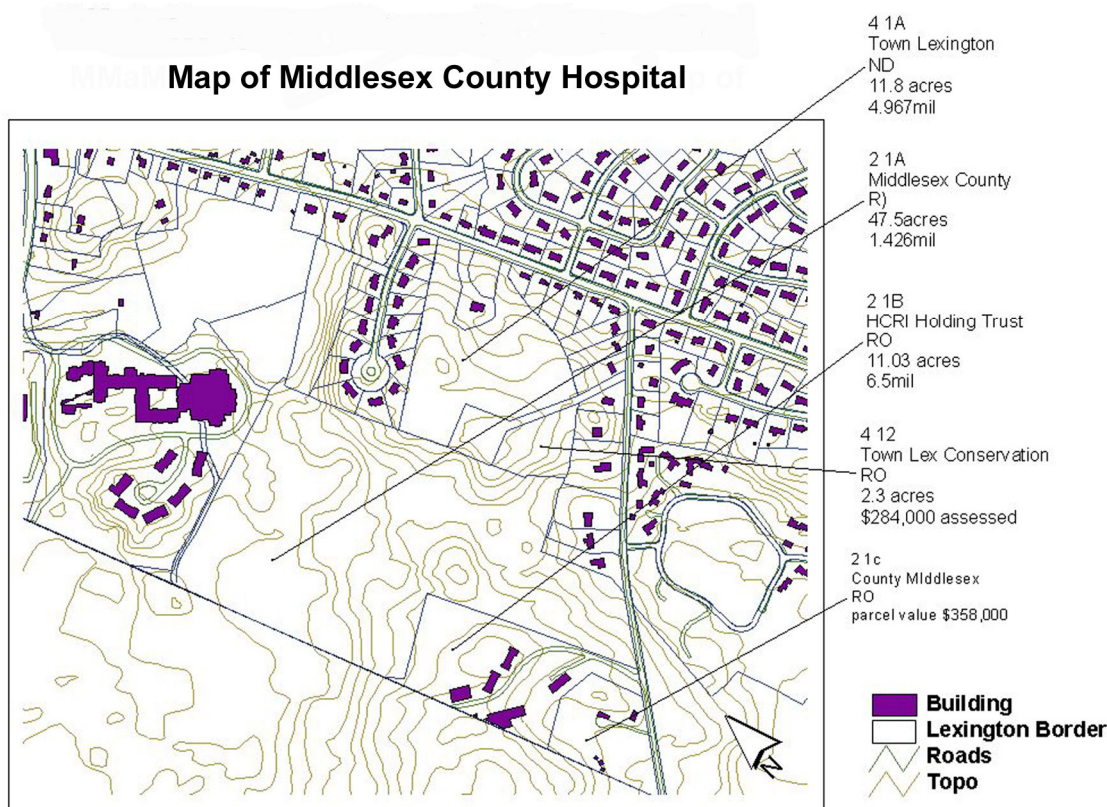
At issue are Lot 1 with 54 acres, 46 acres of which are in Lexington, and Lot 3 with 5 acres all in Waltham. Lot 3 is mostly wetland and thus not so much at risk for development. But Lot 1 has wooded uplands and open meadows as well as wetlands. This beautiful piece of land contains a pond, two certified vernal pools and a likely third one, and a portion of an historic cart road that in colonial times was a main road eastward toward Boston. It abuts two pieces of Lexington conservation land as well as the Waltham pieces mentioned and, across Walnut St, the vast open space preserved from the Met State Hospital “development”. Preservation of at least some of this remaining open space is particularly critical for the integrity of the land designated by Mass Audubon as the Western Greenway.

The rare opportunity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to preserve as open space such a large contiguous tract in these largely built-up towns is of paramount importance and has gotten the attention and the promise of action from both municipalities as well as our State Representatives Kaufman and Stanley. Unfortunately, the high price they got for the sale of Lot 6 has shown DCAM what a gold mine they have in Lot 1, and they are now intent on moving fast toward determining how much of Lot 1 would be developable within the RO zoning constraints.

After a couple of meetings between DCAM, Representative Stanley, Glenn Garber (Lexington's Planner), and Selectman Jeanne Krieger, the current outlook is as follows. DCAM intends to move as fast as possible while Chapter 548, the special law that provides them an expedited process for land sale, remains in effect. Lexington's Middlesex Hospital Ad Hoc Committee has been formed to represent local interests;

they're working on the establishment of a Memo of Understanding with DCAM. The committee had originally hoped for a two or more year planning process, and held out hope that all the remaining open space could be preserved. Given the position DCAM has taken, they have scaled back their expectations of what's possible and are recommending the following steps:

- DCAM will hire a recognized land planning firm to study the natural topographic, vegetative, soil, scenic and historic characteristics of the property and to identify logical development envelopes where limited housing might be placed. The consultant should also be involved from the initial site study throughout the meetings and planning process.
- The Lexington Planning Board, Board of Selectmen and Middlesex Hospital Committee will have the option of reviewing and giving input on the Request for Proposal (RFP) offered by DCAM for the planning consultant.
- DCAM, with co-sponsorship of the towns (perhaps adding Belmont as well) would hold a series of public charrettes (charettes are focused design forums) this fall, intended to reach a consensus on a land use concept for this parcel. Initially DCAM talked of only one charrette, but it was pointed out that this would be inadequate, if not impossible, in terms of reaching agreement, and that multiple sessions would be necessary.
- At the conclusion of this consensus planning initiative DCAM would reserve the right to auction a limited portion of Parcel 1 for single-family housing. The balance of the parcel would be deeded to Lexington as conservation land.



# Lexington Land Stewards Reorganization

By Keith Ohmart

With the encouragement and participation of Karen Mullins, Conservation Administrator, a small group of land stewards has been meeting for the past several months to discuss various ideas for reorganizing the Land Stewards organization. The group initially identified the following critical needs as the focus of this effort:

- Assist the Conservation Administrator in delegating minor conservation land management issues to a trained group of “senior” stewards. The intent is to unburden the Conversation Administrator who often does not have time to attend to all matters of this nature that have been brought to her attention.
- Provide training and leadership to entry-level stewards to prevent inappropriate land management practices on town-owned conservation land.
- Create recruitment opportunities to expand the active Steward membership through increased visibility of Steward sponsored activities.
- Create a trained core of crew leaders able to direct the activities of volunteers who turn out for conservation land infrastructure work day projects.

A proposed reorganization plan drafted by this group was presented at the Stewards meeting September 23. The attendees at the meeting provided good suggestions and useful feedback. A revised version will be developed and presented at a future meeting.

In addition to its work on the proposed organizational structure, this group has also spent time discussing various types of incentives to encourage more participation in Stewards activities. Ideas ranged from free lunches served at work days (a hit at the



May 8 Parker Meadow work day), to pocket identity cards and emblazoned articles of apparel such as work vests for Stewards, to an annual Steward of the Year award to be conferred at a public event such as an annual Stewards picnic.

Those who are interested in learning more about these reorganization activities, please contact Keith Ohmart

([kohmart@verizon.net](mailto:kohmart@verizon.net), 781-862-6216).

Those interested in becoming stewards, contact David L. Kaufman, 152 Burlington Street, Lexington, MA 02420-1726.

([DavidLKaufman@rcn.com](mailto:DavidLKaufman@rcn.com))



## **A Tree Inventory for Lexington**

by Nell Walker

In 2000 the Board of Selectmen created Lexington's first Tree Committee. One of the mandates to the new committee was to launch an inventory of public street trees. For many years the official estimate of the street tree population was 10,000 trees. Records have been kept for at least ten years regarding removals and new planting. Unfortunately the removal - replacement ratio in this time has always been negative, varying from 2 takedowns to one planting to an alarming 4 to 1.

A real inventory would not only provide an accurate count of the public street tree population, but also serve as an essential aid to planning for new tree installations and a key for efficient daily maintenance.

For the past three years the Committee has not been able to obtain funds for tree planting or an inventory from warrant articles or from the operating budget. This summer our application for a \$10,000 grant from the State was turned down in favor of two large awards directed to Worcester and Springfield to develop comprehensive inventory systems.

Other avenues are being explored so that an initial inventory can commence soon. If successful, the Committee plans to train volunteers to use small hand-held units equipped with software to collect essential data (location, species, size and condition). This information can be entered into the town's existing GIS (geographic information system) database.

Students and citizens who would be interested in volunteering to work on the inventory please call Karen Longeteig at 781-862-4094.



## **Town-Wide Reading Project Proposed**

By Keith Ohmart

An ad hoc group of Lexingtonians is in the process of organizing a town-wide reading project focusing on E.O. Wilson's book, *The Future of Life*. Approximately a dozen individuals including members of the library community, town conservation groups, and elected officials held an initial meeting on August 11 to begin the planning process for this event. It is hoped to expand representation for the planning of this project to include representatives from as wide a spectrum of the town as possible.

The initial idea under consideration is to sponsor activities centered around a reading of Wilson's book. A kick-off event featuring Lexington resident Wilson himself would initiate the project. This would be followed by discussion groups at various venues and levels throughout the town in the ensuing months. Additional readings might be suggested. More formal events such as a lecture series might be planned. These are but some of the ideas thrown out at the initial planning meeting. A tentative launch date of early 2005 is under consideration with a calendar of activities to take place over the following 6-9 months.

Objectives proposed for this project range from macro level education regarding the global environment to the possibility of generating local action plans dealing with town environmental issues. The ad hoc planning group also expressed the hope that engaging in a town-wide undertaking of this nature would lead to more and better communication throughout our community on many levels, in contrast to the sometimes contentious climate resulting from town political issues.

Those who are interested in learning more about this project or who wish to become involved in the planning process are invited to contact Keith Ohmart ([kohmart@verizon.net](mailto:kohmart@verizon.net), 781-862-6216).



## **Arboreal History**

By Nell Walker

Lexington is in a decade long cycle of gradual removal of our street tree canopy. The town's Annual Report states that in 2002 172 trees were removed along our streets while 70 trees were planted. In 2003, 112 public street trees were removed, and 77 planted.

This is only the latest in a historical cycle of tree removal. One removal cycle started more than sixty years ago and afflicted a single grand native species. Photographs at the turn of the 19th century (1890's) depict Lexington's streets and the Green lined with stately American Elms (*Ulmus americana*).



An imported fungal blight decimated this species, especially those trees planted as a monoculture along city streets across the country. It was a great ecological catastrophe and completely changed the environment of the streets.

In the last few years Lexington has no longer budgeted any special effort (injections, fertilizer) to control Dutch elm disease. The photograph on the left depicts a rare mature survivor on Massachusetts Avenue, across from St. Bridget's Church.

There is hope that the new planting of a disease resistant cultivar at Emery Park (see photo on page 1) will initiate a restoration of the Elm to its rightful place in the New England landscape.

