



Dudley Conservation Land Trust Newsletter



Autumn 2013

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A (longer than usual) Message from the President – Sandy Peterson

While working in my garden this past season, I would often hear the sheer delight of children running along the boardwalk of Tufts Branch Wildlife Sanctuary or their squeals of excitement as they made their way up the switchback trail. I smiled, remembering back to my childhood walks in the woods where, for once, my sisters and I got to lead our parents through woodland paths, and shout back to them about all the things we were discovering, reassuring ourselves that they were still within hearing distance. I still love walking in the woods where each visit evokes early memories, a sense of peace and wonder, all over again. I'm sure it is the same for many of you, as well. Indeed, it is hard to quantify how much connecting with our natural world is essential to our well-being. Much poetry and prose has been written about one's personal experiences at such moments. It is my hope that at least one of the following excerpts will resonant with you.

While reading Oliver Sacks, (clinical neurologist), "The Man Who Mistook His Wife for A Hat," I was particularly struck by the story of a young man, William, suffering from severe Korsakov's Syndrome, causing him disorientation, amnesia, and constant confabulations which initially seemed clever and funny to others but inevitably left listeners feeling his tormented disconnection with reality, as if "he had no soul." Dr. Sacks ends the chapter with this:

Our efforts to 're-connect' William all fail – even increase his confabulatory pressure. But when we abdicate our efforts, and let him be, he sometimes wanders out into the quiet and undemanding garden...and there, in its quietness, he recovers his own quiet...the presence of plants, a quiet garden, the non-human order, making no social or human demands upon him, allow this identity-delirium to relax, to subside; and by their quiet, non-human self-sufficiency and completeness allow him a rare quietness and self-sufficiency of his own, by offering (beneath, or beyond, all merely human identities and relations) a deep wordless communion with Nature itself, and with this the restored sense of being in the world, being real.

Though there is no hard science here, Dr. Sacks makes an insightful observation that this natural setting momentarily shifted something for this young man, offering him quiet and peace that none of his caretakers had been able to do.

Recently, I became familiar with the Appalachian Mountain Club's "Walk off the War" where Veterans are offered a chance to walk the 2,180 mile Appalachian Trail to soothe their psychological, emotional, and physical wounds of war, a kind of therapy through Nature. Listening to the interviews of a few participants, through their tears and laughter, it was clear that this long challenging journey in the wilderness rendered a sense of peace, quiet and healing for these warriors who had witnessed the worse of humanity. Cindy Ross, in an AMC story about some of these participants, writes:

Steve Clendenning, a retired Marine Corps staff sergeant. He is smiling and looks so lighthearted and happy that I forget his troubled past, which led him to join Warrior Hike. A roadside bomb exploded when Clendenning was deployed in Iraq in 2006. He suffered traumatic brain injury and hearing loss, and two of his friends died. He has spent the last four years seeing doctors, getting brain scans, and attending weekly counseling sessions. He tried to kill himself on the anniversary of his injury. When Clendenning began hiking the Appalachian Trail, he suffered from a recurring nightmare of being pinned down in an abandoned building and being killed in terrible ways. The nightmare haunted him, even as he lay in his nylon tent out in nature. 'With everything I was dealing with, I thought hiking the trail would help me,' he said. 'At home, I was constantly vigilant.... I couldn't go anywhere without thinking, watching. I couldn't sit in a restaurant with my back to an entrance. Out here, I've turned all that off.'

President's message continued on back page



View of knoll

“Green Energy” submitted by Keith Kirkland

In recent years, Governor Deval Patrick has advocated for increasing the amount of renewable or “green” energy produced in Massachusetts. While there are many types of renewable energy including biomass and wind, solar projects are the most noticeable renewable energy projects here in Central Massachusetts. These projects can be found everywhere from building roof tops to large commercial sites along Rte. 20. Backers talk about the myriad of benefits from green energy to include less reliance on foreign oil; high quality jobs within these industries; and reduced carbon emissions into the atmosphere. However, as these projects leave the planning stage and become part of the landscape, there are concerns. A prime example is a solar “farm” created on 25 acres of former pasture on Blackmer Road in Dudley and Southbridge. While the idea of a solar farm has a nice ring to it, the project is anything but pastoral with reflective panels marching up the hillside. There is also a chain link fence surrounding the old field, with danger signs warning bypassers of the electrical hazards. Another issue is the possible lack of local control in locating these projects given that the growth in renewable energy is a state mandate.

There’s no denying that solar energy can reduce our energy needs from oil and gas. At the same time, we need to be made aware that solar farms have an industrial impact on the landscape that does not belong in a rural area. While they may be “green”, solar farms are hardly beautiful and, as such, should be located in the proper area. In Dudley, this would include the roofs of municipal and commercial buildings, or industrially zoned land that is convenient to the power grid and is away from residences.



Solar “Farm” in Southbridge

Observations From Tufts Branch Wildlife Sanctuary

It has been a fruitful year on the Tufts Branch Sanctuary, literally. The spring season featured some of the most brilliant displays of apple, cherry and pear blossoms I’ve seen in the eleven years I’ve been here. Now much of the ground is carpeted with apples. A new generation of bobcats was observed when a mother and two kittens spilled out of the brush in August. Now the bob kittens look like gangly adolescents. It has been a good year for hickory nuts and the abundant deer will appreciate a respectable acorn crop this winter. Turkey, rabbits, snakes, innumerable birds, insects, squirrels, raccoons, opossum and other animal life continue to thrive.

People too have been omnipresent on the trails and in the fields. Let me again express my appreciation to those who helped with our trail workday in July. The trails are in good shape and it is gratifying to see all the families that frequent the property. Oh, and yes, Miss Grouse continues to supervise most of my trail work.

Submitted by Mark Smith

More photos on last page



Mother and two bobcat kittens



Apple blossoms and apples



Keith Kirkland leads hike in Slater Woods as part of the Walktober events organized by The Last Green Valley and sponsored by Dudley Planning Board

Conservation Lands Grow in Slater Woods

I'm pleased to announce that the Massachusetts Audubon Society has acquired 64 acres of new conservation land in Dudley. The lands abut both existing Mass Audubon holdings and the DCLT's own Slater Woods. Once owned by the Ballard family, the land is heavily forested with pine, maple and oak and is laced with stone walls. It is the classic New England landscape accentuated by the presence of the Olde County Road that traverses through the Ballard lands. With this acquisition, Mass Audubon and the DCLT now is the owner and steward of land on both sides of the Olde County Road for almost half a mile! Our organizations also own a combined 468 acres of conservation land in the northeastern corner of Dudley. Imagine, the DCLT's goal for a 1,000 acres of conserved land around Slater Woods is now almost halfway complete!

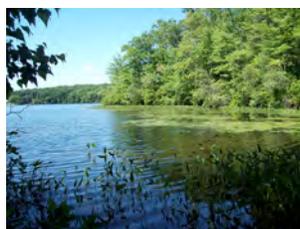
In the coming months, Mass Audubon will begin marking the property lines of the Ballard lands. The property will remain in its natural state to be enjoyed by hikers and wildlife in perpetuity. A significant portion of the Olde County Road will also be preserved as a reminder of a gentler age. What could be better?

Keith Kirkland, Treasurer of the DCLT



Nancy Runkle addresses some of the 43 Walktober participants (left)

View of Peter Pond from Hiland Park (right)



Dudley Farmers' Market

The Dudley Farmers' Market (DFM) has completed its' 4th season for 2013 with record breaking numbers of customers. We were open for 15 consecutive weeks from June 9th through Sept 8th due to such fine weather. This year we had two new vendors, James Flynn and Beth Ann Woods both of Dudley selling their produce. James specialty was Heirloom tomatoes and was this years Blue Ribbon winner at The Woodstock Fair for best grown tomato (photo included). In addition to all our produce, fruit, baked goods, plants, flowers and herbs, we sold peaches and apples from Breezeland Orchards, Warren, MA, corn from Blackmer Farms, N. Grovenordale, CT, honey from Maciejko Apiary, N.Grosvenordale, CT and free-range eggs from B Hansen, Dudley, MA. The profit from these suppliers is donated directly to DCLT. Next year the DFM is planning on expanding our vendor products to natural specialty items. Any questions regarding the DFM can be directed to Paul Wieloch @508-949-0250. Thanks to all who made this year such a great success and believe in our mission to bring local, pesticide-free, sustainable fresh food to our community.



Left: A bustling morning at the farmers market, Right: New vendor James Flynn, who won first prize at the Woodstock Fair for his heirloom tomatos.

Green Tip

Rather than send you old rugs, blankets, sheets and towels to a landfill, consider donating them to either the Dudley Animal Shelter at 508-494-8024 or Webster Cat Connection at 508-949-0779. Thanks.

Calling all DCLT Members:

If you have not already done so, please send us your email address to Dcltrust@aol.com so that we can compile a list that will enable us to keep you informed about upcoming events. Please include "DCLT member" in the subject line. We will not share your email address with anyone outside DCLT. This is an effort to save paper and postage. If you don't have email, please let us know so that we may continue to send you information via US mail. Thank you.



Photos clockwise from upper left: Some of the trail workday participants; DCLT members enjoy lunch on the knoll at Annual Meeting; Re-elected board of directors surrounding founding member, Chet Kulisa. From left back: Marcia Wagner, George Martin, Visha Wieloch, Paul Weiloch, Keith Kirkland, Peggy Collins and Mark Smith. Front: Elaine Martin, Chet Kulisa, Sandy Peterson

Presidents Message continued from first page

Richard Louv, author of “Last Child in the Woods, Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder” re-affirmed my beliefs that Nature offers us infinite possibilities for emotional, intellectual and physical growth:

For children, nature comes in many forms. A newborn calf, a pet that lives and dies; a worn path through woods; a fort nested in stinging nettles; a damp, mysterious edge of a vacant lot – whatever shape nature takes, it offers each child an older, larger world separate from parents. Unlike television, nature does not steal time; it amplifies it. Nature offers healing for a child living in a destructive family or neighborhood. It serves as a blank slate upon which a child draws and reinterprets the culture’s fantasies. Nature inspires creativity in a child by demanding visualization and the full use of the senses. Given a chance, a child will bring the confusion of the world to the woods, wash it in the creek, turn it over to see what lives on the unseen side of that confusion. Nature can frighten a child, too, and this fright serves a purpose. In nature, a child finds freedom, fantasy, and privacy: a place distant from the adult world, a separate peace.

How about a walk in the woods? All our sanctuaries are open from sunrise to sunset every day of the year and offer an ever-changing world of peace and beauty.



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