



Dudley Conservation Land Trust Newsletter Spring 2015



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A Message from the President – Paul Wieloch

First of all, I'd like to say hello to Spring! Hello Spring, we've missed you.

It was a mistake not to obtain my winter gym membership as I thought I was going to be able to walk every day. We have gone through a very hard winter which came unexpectedly at the end of January 2015 and just seemed to linger and linger. Just ask the tomato seedlings trying to grow in the greenhouse.

Looking outside when the temperature is below freezing and the snow is waist-deep (I know this because when I placed the suet in the container hanging from the tree, I almost don't make it back in the house) one has to think about what wildlife has to overcome in these circumstances. I have lived in Dudley for over 50 years and this past winter was the first time the deer came up to our house to nibble on our shrubs and eat from my neighbor's birdfeeder. The deer were the only animals we saw. One has to think about the rabbits, wild turkeys, foxes, etc. and how they fend for themselves in this environment. You have to wonder if this was a new experience for them and they had to learn how to manage to survive. Now that Spring is here, the snow is gone, temperatures are warming, the deer have retreated back to the forest for safety and where new growth provides their food.

Spring: Clean the yard. Start the seedlings. Wait for the hummingbirds. Till the soil. All the things we do to make us forget that winter even happened...and the animals of winter become the animals of spring, caring for themselves without any planning for the future.

Paul Wieloch, President DCLT

Upcoming Events:

May 16 & 17, 2015

Annual Plant Sale

9:00 - 3:00

119 West Main St.

June 16th, 2015

General Meeting – open to all
6:30 PM at The Black Tavern,
138 Center Rd, Dudley.



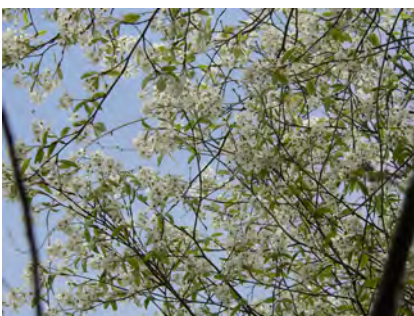
Above: Ed Hood, Executive Director of Opacum Land Trust, addresses the Winter DCLT general meeting

Walktober 2015

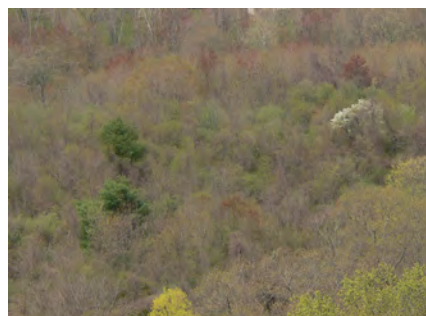
Visit DCLT's current project Wieloch Woods to be acquired by fall. Date TBA.

Just a reminder

If you have not done so, please send us your email address at dcltrust@aol.com, to be kept updated on upcoming events. For those who do not have email, we will contact you either by phone or regular mail. Thank you.



Left: Serviceberry tree blooming deep in the shrublands of Tufts Branch Wildlife Sanctuary. Right: Same tree visible from Healy Rd. driving west.



Observations from Tufts Branch Valley Wildlife Sanctuary

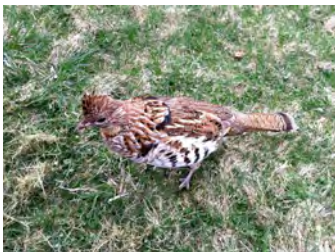
After this harshest winter on record, the trails, trees, meadows and vistas have snapped back to their inviting form. Except for the rare arctic adventurer, the sanctuary had a respite from human activity. Now the hikers, dog walkers, photographers and naturalist are back in force.

While I haven't done a methodical scientific survey, it is my belief that most of the visitors to this property are not DCLT members. We are fine with that and welcome everyone who respects the land and follows the rules. Still, if we could bring some of these non-members into the organization, their support would strengthen our position. If you're out walking and strike up a conversation with someone who isn't a member, or who really doesn't understand our mission, I hope you will take the opportunity to educate and recruit.

A new activity on the property is personal artistic expression. Several cairns (balanced stone sculptures) have been constructed. While interesting and even well done, we don't want the sanctuary becoming a personal gallery. Further, it is illegal to dismantle the historic stonewalls, and stones should not be removed from the streambed or riparian area.

We continue to work at balancing our efforts to accommodate the interests of dog walkers and the wildlife that makes its home in the sanctuary. We are somewhat concerned that we have not seen any bobcats in several months. It could be that their absence is a function of some natural cycle, but certainly it is a departure from the last 12 years. It seems prudent to remind everyone that the policy for dogs is that they are always under control and they are not to chase wildlife. For most dogs, that means they stay on a leash.

In closing, and sadly, I must report the passing of Miss Groussey. I found her remains in my garden, just a few feet from where she had once "helped" me plant asparagus. I've spent much time speculating about her, wondering about her unusual attachment to me, and can't help thinking she sought out the garden as her final resting place. I will miss her, but my experience with her is a reminder of the mysterious and interesting interactions that are possible in nature if one makes themselves available. by Mark Smith



Right: The late Miss Groussey.

Left: Cairn on TBVWS



Recycling, a Personal View by Visha Wieloch

It's the beginning of March. I am frustrated as I stand in front of my kitchen sink washing the 6 cell plastic seedling trays. Frustrated because this was to be done last Fall and all prepared for this Spring's planting. I wash tray after tray, using my old bottle brush, swishing & rinsing in the bleached water solution prior to air drying. As I stand in position, I can also look out the window and see the glacier of snow that encompasses my back yard. There are foot prints of all sorts of animals here and there among the skeletons of leafless bushes and flower stalks. The deer trails and foot prints are most impressive, as this is the first time I have viewed them in our yard in the 18 years of living here on Center Road. We have seen these impressions on our deck, crossing from the front to the rear of our yard. Deer presence has also been evidenced by the devastation to the holly and yew bushes next to our house. As bad as all this seems, they have experience the harshest of winters and will do what they have to do to survive.

My vision goes to the snow covered vegetable garden, the bean trellis and the brush beyond our yard. It continues on with an overlay of snow that covers our pond and then sweeps upward to the thick, old evergreens clustered between bare hardwoods. No more dripping of the white icing on their limbs, but now exposing all the tree branches. My eyes move upward as the ridge appears hitting the bright blue sky..... Now, I know why I stand here, year after year, doing my part of the recycling process. This site is very precious and very personal. I do not want to see my plastic containers in a landfill or at the recycling center until they are not useful anymore. As long as these trays can be used again, I'll be returning to wash them again, to fill with soil and seeds and watch the life of a plant start in our small greenhouse and wonder again on the whole event and the connection to the land and our little piece of it here on earth.

At the DCLT Plant Sale there will be a big yellow box at the check-out area titled "Recycle Pots Here Please." We encourage you to return your cleaned pots here and they will be used again for next year. You will be helping the environment and helping The DCLT Plant Sale Committee. Thank you.



“Stinging Nettles – Healing or Harmful?”

by Sandra Peterson

The very name “Stinging Nettles” sounds menacing, and if you’ve ever experienced the prick from a Stinging Nettle and the burning sting that follows, you will most likely decide to stay away from this “toxic” plant. However, just like all things in nature it offers more than meets the eye (or the skin). Yes, they can sting but did you know you can eat them and they are very nutritious (containing protein, Vitamins A, B, C, iron, calcium and potassium) and tasty? Russ Cohen has two delicious recipes (Stinging Nettle Soup and Wild Greens Spanikopita) for this plant in his book “Wild Plants I have Known...and Eaten” Russ recommends using gloves to snip a bunch of tops of young plants in early spring, placing them in a bag, washing them well in a big pot of cold water, then using tongs place wet nettles in a pot and steam for about 5 minutes. They are now ready to be eaten with salt and vinegar or butter or to be used as you would in any spinach dish. Enjoy!

And did you also know that Stinging Nettles make an amazing fertilizer for tomatoes, garlic, potatoes, leeks and plants in the brassica family (cabbage, broccoli, Brussel Sprouts, kale, arugula, turnip)? Here’s how to make fertilizer from these versatile plants. Use gloves to pick leaves and stems when plants are just about to bloom (about a foot or so tall) and place a bunch in a bucket and fill with water to cover plants. Cover bucket and leave alone for two weeks, at which time your “nettle tea” fertilizer will be well-steeped. Before removing cover, be sure to block your nose, as the tea is really stinky. Strain the tea from the leaves into a storage container and voila – you have a concentrated fertilizer tea which will need to be mixed with water in a 1 part tea to 10 parts water ratio. Apply to soil around your plants and watch them explode with fertility. Warning this fertilizer is not good for onions, beans, and peas.

Incidentally, if you are stung by a nettle, look for some nearby jewel weed, use the leaves and stems of the jewel weed to rub it on the sting. This should offer some relief.



Mother Snapping Turtle rests on her way back to French River after laying eggs at Leovich Landing



Old Dam on TBVWS in Spring Colors



Don't miss the apple blossoms which are about pop on TBVWS.

DCLT Seventh Annual Plant Sale Is Almost Here!

The DCLT Plant Committee is so excited to be planning and working on the Seventh Annual Plant Sale to be held Saturday and Sunday, May 16th and 17th from 9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. at Marty's, 119 West Main Street. Our theme this year is "Plants That Heal, Plants That Harm," highlighting the impact of plants in our lives. Handouts listing plants that are harmful to pets and children will be available.

We will be offering a wide variety of annuals, perennials, herbs, vegetables, and houseplants for sale. The ever popular hanging baskets and geraniums are stunning this year. The Cemetery baskets sell out quickly, so come early for the best selection. There will also be a silent auction on a beautifully handcrafted garden bench, as well as raffles. The "Garden Shed" will offer a wide array of garden tools and accessories. Also, Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer your gardening questions and offer expert advice.

All proceeds go land protection and stewardship of our sanctuaries. With something for every gardener, we hope to see you all at the sale! by Elaine Martin



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