



NEWS

NEWS FROM THE WAREHAM LAND TRUST • VOLUME 9, NUMBER 1 • AUTUMN 2011

'The River,' corrected the Rat. 'It's my world, and I don't want any other. What it hasn't got is not worth having, and what it doesn't know is not worth knowing. Lord! the times we've had together!'

Kenneth Grahame, The Wind in the Willows

The Weweantic River

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The Weweantic Today

Still the lower reaches of the river teemed with mature spawning fish and American eel as well as nurseries of juvenile herring, American shad, rainbow smelt, sea lampreys and white perch, which today, still attempt the upriver swim and struggle annually, a few to actually scale a dilapidated fish ladder at Horseshoe Pond and traverse the pond in order to reach traditional spawning grounds. At the river's mouth, bluefish, scup, striped bass, flounder and lobster survive a compromised environment. At the river's egress to Buzzards Bay, some

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In addition to the water dwellers, a variety of shore birds, amphibians, reptiles and insects, including various dragonflies, turtles, hawks, toads and deer call the Weweantic watershed home. Migrating birds return with clocklike precision to commemorate the change of seasons in its wetlands and on its ponds. A host of common creatures, rare plants and animals, species of special concern and indeed, endangered species live, breed (sun bathe) and seemingly thrive within its



Endangered Red Bellied Cooter Soaks up the Rays

photo by Grit



Map prepared by: Buzzards Bay NEP

Steps to a Cleaner Weweantic River

- The cranberry industry is committed to improving the efficiency of its bogs, reducing fertilizer loads and introducing tail water recovery systems to minimize nitrogen releases into the watershed.
- The Wareham Board of Health is working closely with the Buzzards Bay Coalition to follow up on a Wareham Nitrogen Consensus Action Plan drafted in 2009 in an effort to establish new town wide nitrogen reduction regulations for new residential construction, some residential expansions and replacement of failed septic systems.
- Sewer extensions, though costly, reduce nitrogen pollution.
- **Preservation of open space**

of the river's abutting neighborhoods are sewered. In addition, cranberry bogs have been in operation along the Weweantic for more than 200 years and at present, the Weweantic/Sippican watershed has more cranberry bogs than any other coastal watershed in Massachusetts. Nitrogen fertilizer and phosphorous from the bogs contribute to poor water quality as also do residential lawn fertilizers, road run off and animal waste. Water quality in the upper reaches of the estuary is more degraded as tidal flushing with the waters of Buzzards Bay dilutes nitrogen levels at the outer reaches. Yet, in a grand irony understandable only to Mother Nature, nitrogen is sometimes reintroduced into the river's mouth in a tidal

backwash from other contaminated Bay estuaries.

The Former McCabe Property

In July of this year, a land acquisition project closed protecting 48 acres of open space adjacent to the town of Wareham's existing Fearing Hill Conservation area. The properties combined protect more than a mile of riverfront and help filter and prevent nitrogen, phosphorous and other pollutants from entering the river. Additionally, the contiguous 114 acres provide a riparian corridor for native fauna and open more of this scenic watershed to two-legged species for hiking, kayaking and just generally



Weweantic River at Fearing Hill

Photo by Kathy Pappalardo

exploring. Protection of the new property (former McCabe parcel) was the culmination of collaborative efforts by the WLT, the Buzzards Bay Coalition, the Wareham Community Preservation Committee and the Wareham Conservation Commission with additional funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Town of Wareham owns the land and the WLT and Coalition will co-hold a conservation restriction.

Other Conservation Projects in the Pipeline

Working with the WLT and with help from a Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs Award, the Town hopes to preserve an additional 32.5 acres of open space in the Weweantic watershed along Horsehoe Pond to protect water quality and preserve wildlife habitat. At the same time, the Buzzards Bay Coalition is hard at work finalizing protection of other environmentally and historically important land within the Weweantic corridor.

rare freshwater marsh and throughout the Weweantic riverine corridor.

To the unaware, the Weweantic is a dark and pristine beauty. Kayakers are drawn to its tannins-tinted, challenging, rapid-like stretches of churning water as well as to its sleepy, scenic, meandering meadows and marshes. Hikers rejoice on trails beneath the cool shade of lofty pine cathedrals that shelter its banks from on high.

Trouble in Paradise

But, the Weweantic currently is one of the most impaired rivers in the Buzzards Bay Watershed. A major culprit is nitrogen seepage from residential septic systems. To-date, few

Editor's Note

I've lived locally for a quarter of a century and for more than half those years, the Weweantic was no more than a sign by the side of I-195 heading home from the airport. Then, eleven years ago, I was lucky enough to be included among the earliest board members of the WLT and was privy to the negotiations, politics and funding of our first project, the Fearing Hill Conservation Area. I was introduced to the Weweantic River, to its foxes (well, not personally), birds and flora. I saw the river race and tumble with snow melt and spring rains, and after an unusual summer drought when the river was no more than a trickle, saw its exposed riverbed reveal heretofore untold secrets of earlier

times. I enjoyed an unforgettable picnic with three of my dearest friends celebrating the successful completion of the Fearing Hill project. The dappled light through the high tree canopy touched us with magic as we perched on a rock above the river drinking in the peace and serenity.

I'd not been back to the Weweantic for some time until John Browning and Jesse Ferreira invited me to visit a newly protected property and another prospective conservation area on the river in preparation for drafting this newsletter. On a late fall Friday morning, John drove us to the former McCabe property. As we jumped out of the car, a magnificent great blue

heron alighted from an inactive cranberry bog and shaded the sun with that familiar yet spectacular silhouette. Moments later a pair of red tailed hawks informed us we were welcome to visit but not linger overlong, please. We walked to the river and later to the banks of Horseshoe Pond where the deep shadows of the season played with the reflections on the water's surface quietly, at peace.

In our frantic world, we rush, we race—too often flying by our natural respites at 65 miles an hour—noting no more than a roadside sign as insulated in our cars, we miss the streaks and splashes of light on the water and the skittering of woodland

creatures under an e.e. cummings "blue true dream of sky." But for the work of conservation organizations like the Wareham Land Trust and of dedicated volunteers, so many of these enchanting places would disappear—quietly and forever.

Take time from your busy lives, appreciate our great outdoors, the good work of the WLT and visit the Weweantic. The hawks may give you a hard time, but the great blue heron is expecting you.

— mm

Washington, Wareham, and the Weweantic

One year ago, we reported, that in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Consolidated Land, Energy and Aquatic Resources (CLEAR) Act which, among other things, mandated full funding of the Land, Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at \$900 million dollar per year through 2040.

Over the years, we've treated the LWCF as a bellwether of federal open space funding support. The LWCF uses no taxpayer dollars but rather, is funded by offshore oil and gas lease fees and is intended to preserve natural resources, protect open space and enhance outdoor recreation.

Unfortunately, the legislation never came to a vote on the Senate floor and ultimately, fiscal year 2011 funding of LWCF was 33% lower than the previous year. Earlier this year, President Obama included full funding of LWCF in his 2012 budget proposal. Later in the spring, several senators lobbied hard for LWCF funding, while at the other end of the political/environmental spectrum, some members of the House clamored for elimination of the LWCF altogether. Despite statistics suggesting that outdoor recreation contributes \$730 billion annually to the U.S. economy, supports 6.4 million jobs and stimulates eight percent of all consumer spending, the loud debate



The Weweantic River near its mouth

over the burgeoning U.S. national debt along with an uneven and agonizingly slow economic recovery combined to set a legislative tone eager to sound stimulative and pro-jobs, but ever so slightly deaf to environmental causes. By July of 2011, Congress had chopped the proposed LWCF appropriation from \$300.5 million in 2011 to \$95 million for 2012, disappointing conservation advocates as well as the President who had hoped to jump start his American Great Outdoors Initiative with added funding for open space in general and new urban green spaces in particular.

Nonetheless, despite the somewhat dismal outlook for environmental spending, some federal funding did make its way to Wareham from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to preserve important riverfront conservation land along the Weweantic (see cover story)

State environmental funding was not immune from economic cross winds either. Though on average, Governor Patrick has lived up to his \$50 million



Weweantic River, former McCabe Property

Photo by John Browning

per year commitment to land preservation, this year's funding lags previous years by 10% or \$5 million dollars. And again, despite a reduction in overall disbursements, Wareham managed to be at the receiving end of state funding with an award from the MA Executive Office of Environmental Affairs to protect 32.5 acres of undeveloped land also on the Weweantic through outright purchase. Though the land transaction has yet to be finalized the prospect of protecting even more of the Weweantic watershed is exciting to report.

Locally, open space preservation continues to be a priority among conservation organizations, the Town of Wareham and also, Wareham Town Meeting voters who have approved significant Community Preservation funds to protect important land parcels. As mentioned, the Weweantic River currently is the focus of land preservation efforts at every governmental level. The Wareham Land Trust along with its regional partner, the Buzzards Bay Coalition, have been in the forefront, spearheading and brokering outright purchases as well as raising funds for acquisition of

conservation rights on a number of these properties.

The Weweantic watershed is the largest in the Buzzards Bay basin comprising both the Weweantic and Sippican rivers. The Weweantic estuary alone covers approximately 18,000 acres with 588 acres of water surface, a mean depth of 5.9 meters and is responsible for 13.2% of the freshwater inflow to Buzzards Bay. The Weweantic is among Wareham's most treasured resources though sadly, its water quality ranks among the most nutrient polluted in the entire state. The Wareham Land Trust along with its conservation partners is committed to reversing the river's downward spiral. Prior to inception of the Wareham Land Trust, only 15.5% of the total Weweantic watershed was protected open space. Nearly 140 acres have been preserved since then with an additional 42 acres in the pipeline: still, there is much work to do.

“Who hears the fish when they cry?”

—Henry David Thoreau



A Decade (and more) of Good Work for the Great Outdoors

Wareham Land Trust Marks 10-year Anniversary

i thank You God for most this amazing day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything which is natural which is infinite which is yes.

— e.e. cummings

In a blink of an eye, more than ten years has passed since the Wareham Land Trust was formed (October 2000) and officially incorporated (January 2001). Yet, what a difference a little more than a decade can make. In its short life, the Wareham Land Trust has been instrumental in protecting more

than 550 acres in our community. Thousands of volunteer man hours combined with some blood (*remember the Fearing Hill cat briars?*), lots of sweat (*trail clearing, litter pick up, paint and scrape...*) and even a few tears along the way (*politics anyone?*) and we celebrate our birthday with the greatest of gifts: **550 acres of natural treasure protected forever.**

Birds (and Bats) on the Brain

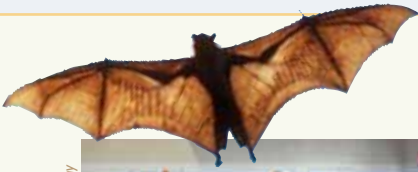


photo courtesy of Susan Asaro Photography



Land Protection Specialist Jesse Ferriera leads Boys & Girls Club members in an exploration of echolocation, or bat communication.

Though the Chinese calendar proclaims 2011 the year of the rabbit, the Wareham Land Trust celebrated the year of the bird (and bat). On February 10, the WLT invited Wayne Petersen, Director of the Important Bird Areas Program for the Massachusetts Audubon Society, to present “Birds and Bird Facts that every Birder Should Know” to a rapt audience of seven-to-fourteen year olds at the Wareham Boys & Girls Club.

Later that evening, the Land Trust sponsored a public lecture by Mr. Petersen which addressed fluctuations in Massachusetts bird populations from the arrival of the Pilgrims to current times and examined persecution of birds for feathers and as food in days gone by, to the consequences of pesticide contamination and global climate change today. WLT board member Mack Phinney hosted Mr. Petersen and commented: “We are so fortunate Wayne Petersen could come to address our young people and the public at large—birds have much to tell us about the health of our environment and Mr. Petersen was just the individual to come and help us learn to read the signs.”

In March, land protection specialist Jesse Ferriera and other WLT mem-

bers returned to the Boys & Girls Club for a presentation on bats. Club members learned about the threat of white nose fungus to Massachusetts (and nationwide) brown bat populations and helped build bat houses to add new, safe habitat for local bats.



photo courtesy of Susan Asaro Photography

Boys & Girls Club members build bat houses

Recycling for Conservation — the Greenest of Yard Sales

Never at a loss for new ways to raise funds to support land protection, the Wareham Land Trust hosted a yard sale this fall at the Whitlock’s Landing property. WLT members combed through closets and garages to come

up with a treasure trove of “gently used” items and curiosities. Beneficiary of the proceeds, Mother Nature, was somewhat less than cooperative, sending first tropical storm Irene and a later weather system to postpone the

event twice. However, with the help of WLT board members and friends, the sale was finally held on October 1 and was a resounding success netting more than \$700 for the land acquisition fund.



Membership

Join our efforts to preserve Wareham's open space and natural resources—today!

Membership Categories

Individual:	\$10	\$ _____
Family:	\$20	\$ _____
Supporting:	\$25	\$ _____
Friend:	\$50	\$ _____
Sustaining:	\$100	\$ _____
Sponsor:	\$250	\$ _____
Benefactor:	\$500	\$ _____
Lifetime:	\$1,000	\$ _____
Incorporator:	\$5,000	\$ _____
Conservation Leader (or land donation):	\$10,000	\$ _____
Other contribution:		\$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Town/State/Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Please send contributions to:
The Wareham Land Trust Inc.
P.O. Box 718
Wareham, MA 02571

The Wareham Land Trust is a 501(C)(3) charitable organization. All gifts and bequests to the WLT Land Trust are tax-deductible within IRS guidelines.

Please visit us online at www.WarehamLand.org or call 508-295-0211.

Wareham Land Trust Meetings

Wareham Land Trust public meetings are held several times throughout the year. Please watch local papers for announcements of dates, times, and locations. Board meetings are open to the public and are held on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM at the WLT office at 219 Main Street, Suite E, Wareham.

The Wareham Land Trust

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Cover photo: Weweantic River at Horseshoe Pond, courtesy of John Browning





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"Hills may exalt the spirit; rivers cleanse and soothe it. Seas and forests awe men by their vastness; rivers are informal and companionable. One part of a woodland is pretty much like the rest of it; dozens of mountains resemble each other; no single acre of oceans, lake or pond differs perceptibly from the remainder. No one has ever seen two rivers that were identical for a furlong. No one ever will."

— Frederic F. Van de Water

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photo by Gai